

EUROPEAN STUDIES IN SOCIAL THEORY

# The Foundations of the Social

Between Critical Theory  
and Reflexive Sociology



by  
**Simon Susen**



***The Foundations of the Social***

*To my parents*



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Simon Susen  
November 2007

## *Foreword*

### **A Critical Defence of the Social**

**S**imon Susen's monumental exploration of the fundamental issues of social theory is welcome for a variety of reasons. It is a powerful and cogent defence of the idea of critical theory, and at the same time it offers an original way of thinking about the basic issues of social theory—agency and structure, the foundations of social relationships, the construction of social theory, and the nature of human communication. His work is ambitious, but appropriately so; his aim is no less than to give an account of the foundations of the social through a comparative study of Pierre Bourdieu and Jürgen Habermas. In the process of exploring the ontological foundations of social life and the normative foundations of critical thought, he reminds us of the fragility of social life in the modern world and our desperate need for clear thinking about the causes of its very precariousness. The most influential theories of recent decades have focused on risk, mobility, fluidity, ambiguity and liquidity in an attempt to come to terms with one central question: the end of the social?

Susen's purpose is also in many respects a moral one—what are the necessary conditions for what he calls human coexistence? How do communication and reflexivity contribute to the possibilities of better

social interaction between human beings whose material interests may promote conflict rather than solidarity? This remarkable book shows us how sociology as a discipline sits at the centre of these political and ethical issues around human co-operation and social solidarity.

In an era of vigorous interdisciplinary research, defending the discipline of sociology as a special mode of theory and research is obviously unfashionable. Even more unfashionable is the idea that classical sociology has a lively relevance to modern issues and conditions. To defend sociology ultimately requires us to define the social, and to define the social is implicitly to defend a classical tradition of sociology. It is obvious that in creating sociology as a special method of thinking about social institutions, Max Weber and pre-eminently Emile Durkheim offered a conception of the social as a relatively autonomous field of study. The issue has been to define 'classical' without prematurely foreclosing on intellectual debate and development. Although the period 1890 to 1920 was clearly important as a defining moment in the formation of sociology, it would be absurd to take these three decades as a precise definition of the classical tradition. It would be equally misleading to define sociology in terms of a list of people from Auguste Comte to Talcott Parsons or from Saint Simon to Robert Merton. The sociological study of the social has to be understood sociologically as more than a classical period and more than a list of individuals.

My suggestion in this foreword is that we can benefit from a comparison between the concept of the political and the social. 'The political' in terms of the philosophy of Carl Schmitt refers to an emergency in which the struggle between friend and foe shapes political and moral affairs. The core of the political is sovereignty and power. In a similar fashion, one may understand the idea of 'classicality' in the sociological tradition as the intellectual quest to understand and define the social as a special field of intellectual endeavour, and hence to grasp the social as a moral phenomenon distinct from market society, requiring the idea of social solidarity as against rampant individualism. If the political is defined by sovereignty, the social is defined by trust as a foundation of social relations. Trust is the social dimension that underpins the contractual relations of the social sphere. If money is the medium of exchange in the economy, trust is a condition of the communication of meaning in the social field. If politics is about power and sovereignty,

then sociology is ultimately the study of solidarity, trust and communication—or the conditions of human coexistence. If economics can be construed as the study of behaviour involving rational calculation in a context of scarcity, sociology is the study of the conditions that make solidarity possible, despite the divisions of class, gender, race and generations. Both Bourdieu and Habermas—the ostensive topic of this book of social theory—were from different perspectives concerned to study the conditions that contain or promote struggles over scarce resources, how individuals engage in competition and co-operation, and how we should characterise sociological knowledge of the social in relation to actor's own interpretations. In short, both Bourdieu and Habermas were concerned to comprehend sociological theory as a dimension of critical theory from the point of view of emancipation and reflexivity.

Although there is much disagreement about the exact nature of the social, two interrelated elements appear to be necessary in any plausible definition. These involve firstly patterns or chains of social interaction and symbolic exchange. Secondly, these patterns of social interaction must cohere over time into viable social institutions. Put simply, classical sociology is the study of such social institutions—especially the family and marriage, religion and the sacred, social stratification, the law and so forth. There are various levels of analysis in the classical tradition and major disagreements about whether sociology is the study of institutions (Durkheim) or social acts and interaction (Weber). Because the debate with economics as a science was central to nineteenth-century social thought, it is hardly surprising that sociologists such as Weber and Joseph Schumpeter approached the task of analysing capitalist society in terms of an economic model of social action. The model of classical economics involved the notion of rational actors satisfying their wants in a competitive market of scarcity. Social action was modelled on a similar set of notions but sociologists wanted to study institutions as much as social actors, they questioned the rationality of economic behaviour by developing the idea of non-rational actions (in religion), and they treated the notion of needs and wants as problematic by demonstrating their embeddedness in culture. In the course of this debate, sociology developed a much richer or thicker notion of economic rationality. In their quest to understand the specific nature of the cultural circumstances of social action (often through ethnographic

research) anthropologists and sociologists could not achieve the exactness and reliability of economic models of society. Sociologists do not have anything quite equivalent to money as a cross-cultural measure of value, and hence specifying the conditions of human coexistence appears to be inherently more difficult than spelling out the determinants of the business cycle.

We might define the strong programme of sociology as an attempt to define and defend the social as an autonomous field of forces. As I have suggested, this defence of the social amounted to the study of the institutionalisation of action by reference to norms and sanctions that produce regularly occurring constraints on behaviour. Generally speaking, these social institutions are the social forces that bind communities together. The social is characterised by the dynamic process between solidarity and scarcity or between shared values and conflicting interests. In practical terms, sociology involves the study of the values, cultural patterns, trust, and normative arrangements that underpin institutions and the systems of social stratification that express scarcity. It is clear that this strong programme of sociology as the quest to define the social is very closely connected to Durkheim's attempt to define social facts in his study of the rules of sociological methods, namely that sociology tries to avoid reference to psychological variables in its explanations of social phenomena. Sociological explanations are sociological in the strong sense of the term, because they do not refer to individual dispositions as causes of action.

If the weak programme of sociology is the study of the motives and meanings of social actions for individuals, then the strong programme insists that in the majority of cases the social forces that determine social life are not recognised or understood by social actors. Indeed there is a sense in which social actors in their everyday lives are not interested in such questions. There is an important difference between the motives and reasons for action in the everyday world and the models of explanation of social science. This view of sociology of course presents a real problem for critical theory, since critical social theory has insisted that social actors are never entirely dupes of social forces that they neither perceive nor understand. This tension also constitutes much of the thinking of both Bourdieu and Habermas about the nature of knowledge, and the possibilities of reflexive sociology and critique.

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In Bourdieu at least, the ideas about the strategies of social actors are an attempt to avoid the determinism of both Marxism and structuralism, and in this regard Bourdieu may well have a closer connection to the American tradition of pragmatism than is conventionally allowed. Habermas's interest in language use, via the work of J. L. Austin, also meant that he was more concerned to grasp how actors use language rather than how for example the very structure of grammar has effects on action that can be construed as deterministic.

By constructing the core tradition of sociology in this form as an ongoing debate about the nature of the social, the connections between individuals and institutions, the relationship between the social theories of sociologists and the ideas of the social actors themselves, and finally about the critical character of social theory as such, we can regard Bourdieu and Habermas as modern representatives of this (European) tradition. Bourdieu's notions of symbolic and social capital are specifically designed to pick up the social dimension of struggles over scarce resources in his study of taste. Bourdieu perceives the social world from the perspective of performance or the logic of practice in which agents struggle over economic and symbolic capital. The regularities of social life are produced by the construction of regular patterns of disposition and taste within the habitus. Habermas has been primarily concerned with the nature of unfettered communication and the distortions of communication that prevent consensus emerging between social actors who do not have equal power. Habermas has been engaged in the exercise of understanding how normatively binding agreements can grow out of free-flowing, undistorted communication.

Simon Susen's creation of a general critical social theory of society is an astonishing achievement. He has taken two of the most influential thinkers of our time, comparing and contrasting their approaches to sociology and the social. Such a systematic comparison has not previously been undertaken and the task is formidable, but Susen has surmounted these analytical problems with considerable skill, intelligence and determination. Habermas is taken as the principal contemporary representative of critical theory in which the social is understood primarily as communication. Susen develops a powerful set of criticisms of Habermas's theory—for example the overly romantic view of the lifeworld in relation to the social system. While Habermas is associated

with critical theory, Bourdieu has been the leading exponent of reflexive sociology in which he attempts to overcome the traditional binary oppositions of sociological theory between determinism and individual will, structure and agency, and objective and subjective accounts of the social. However, Susen's critical assessment of Bourdieu raises serious questions about the ability of Bourdieu's theory ultimately to transcend the distinction between determinism and agency.

In order to overcome the limitations of both Habermas and Bourdieu, Susen proposes a cross-fertilisation of their ideas. The result is a genuinely comprehensive and critical social theory of the foundations of the social in which he confronts us with a major intellectual challenge: to identify the socio-ontological foundations of human existence. This quest for the social is important for three reasons: it allows us to define the universal features of human coexistence; it allows us to see this coexistence in terms of ordinary social life; and, finally, it permits us to grasp the emancipatory character of all social life from which we can break out of any tendency in social thought towards fatalism. In order to start this task, he presents us with a five-dimensional model of the social in terms of labour, language, culture, desire, and experience. These five elements constitute what we might call the philosophical anthropology of Susen's theory of the ontological roots of the social. In this respect, his approach reminds one of the philosophical anthropology that was the basis of the early Marx's account of the human agent as creatively transforming the environment and at the same time being constantly transformed by those very practices. The scale and scope of Susen's attempt to reconstruct social theory reminds one appropriately of Marx's Paris Manuscripts that laid the foundations of a critical understanding of the exploitative character of economic relations in capitalism and the alienation of human beings from their own social nature.

The problem for modern intellectuals is to understand and resist the decline of the social. The possibility of the end of the social in the modern world coincides with the decline of the moral authority of collective arrangements and shared values. In a consumer society, the sovereignty of choice produces the sovereign subject. The result is a decline of social capital, the erosion of social institutions and the corrosion of trust. In contemporary societies, the social is under attack from a neo-liberal political agenda which promotes the market as the

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main determinant of value. As Mrs Thatcher famously said, there is no such thing as society; there are only individuals and their families. The defence of sociology is also, therefore, a matter of defending a particular type of society—one in which public institutions, communal activity and collective values are still seen to be important. The social cannot be regarded merely as a residue after economics and politics have taken their cut of reality.

*The Foundations of the Social* is not a book for the faint-hearted. It requires careful and painstaking reading, but it will endlessly repay the scrupulous reader who will find here a rich and rewarding text. His account of the social offers a basic starting point for any critical defence of human coexistence.

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## Introduction

This book is a study of the concept of the social in contemporary critical thought. The core assumption that underlies this study is that we can only identify solid grounds for social critique by identifying the grounds of the social itself. In order to demonstrate this, the book draws upon the work of Jürgen Habermas and Pierre Bourdieu. It explores the nature of the social not only by examining Habermasian critical theory and Bourdieusian reflexive sociology, but also by cross-fertilising them. Although these two approaches have already been compared in the literature<sup>1</sup>, their systematic integration has, to my knowledge, never been undertaken before. The analysis developed in this book seeks to show that some of the main shortcomings of each of these two approaches can be overcome by combining them. Inspired by the cross-fertilisation of Habermasian and Bourdieusian thought, the study proposes a tentative outline of a five-dimensional approach to the nature of the social.

The attempt to combine Habermasian and Bourdieusian social theory may at first glance appear surprising, given that the two accounts are generally regarded as two entirely different—or even diametrically opposed and incompatible—approaches to the nature of the social.<sup>2</sup>

Here, by contrast, it will be argued that, despite the substantial differences that exist between Habermasian and Bourdieusian social theory, the two approaches share significant theoretical concerns. The study will show that both the similarities and the differences between the two approaches allow us not only to compare, but also to integrate them and thereby enrich our understanding of the social.

The predominant view in the literature is that Habermas and Bourdieu are worlds apart. Whereas Habermas's work stands—however controversially—in the neo-Marxist tradition of the Frankfurt School, Bourdieu's oeuvre cannot be dissociated from the Durkheimian tradition of French structuralism. Habermas can be considered a philosopher who seeks to reconstruct the communicative foundations of society, while Bourdieu can be conceived of as a sociologist who aims to uncover the relational nature of society. According to Habermas, language is primarily a medium of communication. According to Bourdieu, language is primarily a medium of social distinction. For Habermas, validity is a matter of rational acceptability. For Bourdieu, on the other hand, validity is a matter of social legitimacy. Whereas Habermas's anthropological optimism is based on the emancipatory force of communicative action, Bourdieu's anthropological pessimism is grounded in the reproductive force of homological action. These are only some of the main differences between Habermas and Bourdieu which are emphasised in the literature and which seem to suggest that any attempt to bring these two thinkers closer together will be fraught with difficulties.

This study seeks to demonstrate that, while Habermas and Bourdieu diverge in some substantial respects, they converge in some other, no less significant, respects. Both are firmly situated in the tradition of European social thought. Both are widely recognised as 'great social thinkers' of the late twentieth century. Both are concerned with the nature of the social. Both seek to propose a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the nature of the social. Both regard language as a central component of the social. Both highlight that modern life is characterised by the increasing complexity of the social. Both are determined to overcome counterproductive divisions in the social sciences, rejecting one-sided accounts of the social. Both claim to uncover the structural grounds of social power and social domination. Both aim not only at the exploration, but also at the

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emancipation of society. Both are certain of the enlightening force of critical reflexivity, and both believe in the possibility and necessity of a critical social science. These are just some of the main commonalities between Habermas and Bourdieu, which are occasionally mentioned, yet hardly ever systematically elaborated upon in the literature. They nonetheless indicate that comparing and combining Habermasian and Bourdieusian social theory may be a viable and fruitful, albeit difficult and challenging, endeavour. This study is an attempt to show that such an undertaking allows us not only to open a critical dialogue between two hitherto almost completely dissociated approaches, but also to enrich our understanding of the social by drawing upon their complementary insights.

More specifically, this study centres on three main research questions, five main research objectives, and three main research claims.

(I) The three main research questions are:

1. What are the ontological foundations of the social? This question is concerned with the structural conditions that make social order possible.
2. What are the normative foundations of social critique? This question is concerned with the grounds on which we can justify our agreement or disagreement with the constitution of existing social relations.
3. What are the main features of a comprehensive critical social theory? This question is concerned with the elaboration of a systematic theoretical framework that allows us to understand the relationship between the nature of social order and the nature of social critique.

(II) The five main research objectives are:

1. to make a case for the reconstruction of Habermasian critical theory and Bourdieusian reflexive sociology;
2. to explore both the Habermasian and the Bourdieusian conception of the social;

3. to identify the shortcomings of both the Habermasian ‘communicative approach’ and the Bourdieusian ‘homological approach’ to the social;
4. to overcome some of the most significant shortcomings of these two approaches by combining them; and
5. to propose an alternative, five-dimensional approach to the nature of the social.

(III) The three main research claims are:

1. that the Habermasian approach—which considers ‘communicative rationality’ to be the normative foundation of critical theory and ‘communicative action’ to be the ontological foundation of the social—is reductionist;
2. that the Bourdieusian approach—which considers ‘scientific reflexivity’ to be the normative foundation of reflexive sociology and ‘homological action’ to be the ontological foundation of the social—is equally reductionist; and
3. that a five-dimensional approach—which considers ‘createdness’, ‘reflexivity’, ‘situatedness’, ‘beyondness’, and ‘immersedness’ to be the normative foundations of critical theory and ‘labour’, ‘language’, ‘culture’, ‘desire’, and ‘experience’ to be the ontological foundations of the social—may be a viable alternative.

In order to confront the complexity of these research questions, objectives, and claims, the book is divided into three main parts. Part I examines one of the most controversial issues within contemporary social theory: the Habermasian paradigm shift in critical theory. Part II analyses an equally contentious issue within contemporary social theory: the Bourdieusian paradigm shift of reflexive sociology. Part III makes a case for the cross-fertilisation of Habermasian and Bourdieusian social theory and proposes a five-dimensional approach to the nature of the social.

It is no accident that the structure of the argument of Part I and Part II mirror each other. This similarity seeks to indicate that, despite the substantial differences that exist between Habermasian and Bourdieusian social theory, the two approaches share many significant

theoretical concerns, which allow us to compare and combine them. Thus, both Part I and Part II are divided into four chapters. The first chapter and the fifth chapter explore the epistemological presuppositions of the two approaches. The second chapter and the sixth chapter look into the theoretical aporias which the two approaches seek to overcome. The third chapter and the seventh chapter scrutinise the constructive alternatives which the two approaches propose for the theorisation of the social. The fourth chapter and the eighth chapter examine the most significant shortcomings of the two approaches.

Part III is divided into two chapters. In the ninth chapter, some key areas of convergence, divergence, and possible integration between Habermasian and Bourdieusian thought are identified. Finally, the tenth chapter explains the main features of the five-dimensional approach to the nature of the social, which is inspired by Habermasian and Bourdieusian thought, but which at the same time seeks to go beyond these two perspectives. The main argument of the study, which weaves these chapters together, can be summarised as follows.

### ***Part I: The Reflection of Critical Theory***

In the first chapter, the Habermasian *concept of critical theory* is elucidated on the basis of three central epistemological reflections. (i) The reflection upon the relationship between knowledge and critique concerns the idea that critique constitutes the motivational cornerstone of critical theory. The strength of critique lies in its power to make the reflective distanciation from the taken-for-grantedness of social life possible. (ii) The reflection upon the relationship between knowledge and interest seeks to reveal that the diverging interests of human knowledge emanate from the diverging interests of human existence. Every specific *Erkenntnisinteresse*<sup>3</sup> is embedded in a specific *Lebensinteresse*<sup>4</sup>. (iii) The reflection upon the relationship between knowledge and language explores the existential significance of the linguistically embedded production of meaning. Our immersion in life is mediated by our immersion in language.

The second chapter examines the *debate over critical theory*. The controversy concerning both the nature and the task of critical theory shows that defining the concept of critical theory is fraught with difficul-

ties. Despite the relative interpretive openness of the concept itself, there are a number of contentious issues related to Habermas's conception of critical theory. Habermas aims to identify and overcome the aporias that are allegedly inherent in three cornerstones of critical theory. (i) The aporias of historical materialism, Habermas contends, are derived from the paradigm of labour. In essence, Habermas accuses Marx of reducing the evolution of the human species to a linear developmental process that is driven by material production. (ii) Following Habermas, the aporias of early critical theory stem from its fatalistic attachment to the paradigm of instrumental reason. Assuming that modern society is permeated by the increasing predominance of instrumental reason, early critical theory is inclined to paint an almost entirely pessimistic picture of modernity, thereby ignoring the emancipatory potential of communicative reason. (iii) The aporias of philosophical hermeneutics are rooted in its short-sighted preoccupation with the paradigm of language. Therefore, Habermas endeavours to replace the interpretive idealism of philosophical hermeneutics by the social holism of critical hermeneutics.

The third chapter analyses the main features of the Habermasian *paradigm shift within critical theory*. Rather than pretending to embrace the entire, multilayered complexity of the Habermasian paradigm shift, this chapter focuses only on those dimensions that are particularly relevant to Habermas's reconceptualisation of the social. In accordance with the previous chapter, three forms of reconstruction are examined. (i) The Habermasian reconstruction of historical materialism is based on the introduction of two concepts that feature centrally in the Habermasian architecture of the social: the concepts of the lifeworld and the system. Thus, the Marxian dichotomy between the material base and the ideological superstructure is replaced by the Habermasian dichotomy between the lifeworld and the system. (ii) The Habermasian reconstruction of critical theory is essentially concerned with the paradigmatic shift from instrumental to communicative reason. According to this shift, the normative foundations of critical theory are to be located in the rational foundations of language. (iii) The Habermasian reconstruction of hermeneutics is motivated by a rigorous defence of the social: the shift from 'philosophical' to 'critical' hermeneutics aims to provide an intersubjectivist account of the production of meaning.

According to this account, it is neither the isolated subject ‘in-itself’ nor the self-sufficient subject ‘for-itself’ but the reciprocity ‘between’ subjects which reveals that intersubjectivity constitutes the ontological precondition for the very possibility of human coexistence.

On the basis of the analysis developed in the preceding chapters, the fourth chapter examines the *shortcomings* of the Habermasian paradigm shift on three main levels. (i) The Habermasian deformation of historical materialism stems from a highly questionable interpretation of Marxian thought. According to this interpretation, Marx tends to reduce the nature of the social to the material and purposive, rather than the symbolic and communicative, dimensions of human life. Yet, this allegation overlooks the significant fact that, similar to the Habermasian paradigm of communication, the Marxian paradigm of production is embedded in a Kantian tripartite conception of human existence. (ii) The Habermasian reinterpretation of early critical theory is in danger of embracing a deradicalised notion of utopia. Reducing the utopian potential of the social to its linguistic dimensions is tantamount to limiting the emancipatory scope of critical theory. (iii) In addition to the pitfalls that are rooted in the contentious Habermasian reinterpretation of historical materialism and early critical theory, the Habermasian linguistic turn is flawed by some serious internal shortcomings which undermine the explanatory power of Habermas’s theory of communicative action. As will be shown, these inherent deficiencies are symptomatic of the complexity of any theoretical project that seeks to derive its own normative foundations from the ontological foundations of the social.

### ***Part II: The Critique of Reflexive Sociology***

In the fifth chapter, the Bourdieusian *concept of reflexive sociology* is explained by analysing its epistemological presuppositions. The project of reflexive sociology, just as the project of critical theory, is committed to the explicit exposure of its implicit normative assumptions. This self-critical posture is illustrated in the importance of three epistemological reflections. (i) The reflection upon the relationship between knowledge and reflexivity concerns the idea that ‘reflexive’ sociology seeks to distinguish itself from ‘mainstream’ sociology by defining itself as a project



of critical science, self-objectifying vigilance, and epistemological distance. (ii) The reflection upon the relationship between knowledge and praxis explores the sociological implications of the fact that knowledge is always embedded in human praxis. The Bourdieusian notion of *doxa* refers to the idea that an ordinary engagement with the world presupposes an ordinary taken-for-grantedness of the world. (iii) The reflection upon the relationship between knowledge and symbolic power obliges us to acknowledge the unavoidable power-ladenness of the production of meaning. Our power to symbolise life by virtue of language is always also the power to be symbolised; our empowerment through the symbolic always also implies our potential disempowerment by the symbolic; linguistic power is symbolic power.

The sixth chapter elucidates the theoretical background to the *debate over reflexive sociology*. The Bourdieusian project aims at the paradigmatic transition from dichotomist and scholastic thought to reflexive-sociological thinking. The latter seeks to overcome the explanatory limitations of mainstream social thought. (i) Bourdieu contends that objectivism is caught up in a one-sided, object-oriented account of the social. (ii) Analogously, Bourdieu asserts that subjectivism remains trapped in a one-sided, subject-oriented account of the social. (iii) Both forms of reductionism are, according to Bourdieu, embedded in the self-sufficient exercise of scholastic reasoning, the explanatory limitations of which can only be surmounted if we are willing to replace the scholastic philosophy of reason by a critical sociology of reason.

The seventh chapter examines the *paradigm shift of reflexive sociology*. Reflexive sociology constitutes a critical project which seeks to leave the intrinsic contradictions of the 'logic of theory' behind and intends to overcome them by exploring the 'logic of practice' instead. This chapter focuses on those dimensions that lie at the heart of the Bourdieusian ontology of the social. (i) The Bourdieusian reconstruction of objectivity is based on the concept of the field, and (ii) the Bourdieusian reconstruction of subjectivity is epitomised in the concept of the habitus. The concepts of field and habitus are scrutinised by shedding light on their principal properties. By demonstrating that field and habitus share fourteen constitutive features, it is argued that the structural commonalities between field and habitus are indicative of their dialectical interpenetration and that, as a consequence, the Bourdieusian concep-

tion of the social succeeds in transcending the artificial division between objectivism and subjectivism. (iii) The Bourdieusian reconstruction of the social does justice to the fact that there is no society without structural interrelationality. In order to specify the meaning of 'the social' in the Bourdieusian sense, five ontological preconditions for the very possibility of human coexistence are identified and elucidated.

The eighth chapter looks into the most crucial *shortcomings* of the Bourdieusian project of reflexive sociology. Following the argumentative structure of the previous chapter, the weaknesses of the Bourdieusian approach to the social are analysed on three main levels. (i) The Bourdieusian conception of objectivity is flawed due to its scientific delegitimisation of ordinary knowledge, its reduction of society to a conglomeration of fields, and its functionalist hypostatisation of power. (ii) The Bourdieusian conception of subjectivity is far from uncontroversial since it is based on a reproduction-oriented notion of the subject, an impoverished notion of human consciousness, and a one-sided interpretation of habituality in terms of regularity rather than reflexivity. (iii) The Bourdieusian conception of society contains some serious theoretical limitations because of its tendency to privilege the object over the subject, its lack of preoccupation with the species-distinctive features of the human social, and its failure to explore the emancipatory potentials inherent in ordinary social life.

### ***Part III: Between Critical Theory and Reflexive Sociology***

The ninth chapter makes a case for the *cross-fertilisation of critical theory and reflexive sociology*. The choice of the work of Habermas and Bourdieu, who feature centrally in the study of this book, is not fortuitous. Contrary to the belief that their theoretical frameworks represent two incommensurable approaches to the nature of the social, here it is argued that they can be cross-fertilised by analysing their affinities and commonalities, their differences and discrepancies, and their complementary aporias and insights. (i) The theoretical effort to identify substantial points of convergence between Habermas and Bourdieu is guided by the conviction that, although these two thinkers may not necessarily be regarded as bedfellows, their approaches share a considerable amount of important concerns. (ii) The theoretical effort to iden-

tify substantial points of divergence between Habermas and Bourdieu confirms the view that Habermas and Bourdieu are worlds apart on many central issues. Rather than denying the existence and significance of these differences, the comparative analysis developed in this chapter seeks to provide a more fine-grained account of the main dimensions that separate the two thinkers from one another. (iii) The theoretical exploration of substantial points of integration between Habermas and Bourdieu shows that their perspectives are not as far apart as they may appear at first sight and that, more importantly, some of the most significant shortcomings of their approaches can be overcome by combining them. If valuable insights can be gained from the systematic cross-fertilisation of Habermasian and Bourdieusian social theory, then the temptation to separate these two approaches in too categorical a fashion should be resisted.

The tenth chapter proposes an outline of a *five-dimensional approach to the social*. Even though this approach is inspired by the in-depth examination of Habermasian and Bourdieusian thought, it also seeks to go beyond these two perspectives. The aim of this chapter is to propose only a tentative outline, rather than a comprehensive programme, for an alternative critical social theory. The formulation of such an outline seeks to grapple with one main challenge: to derive the normative foundations of critique from the ontological foundations of the social. Identifying this challenge may appear simple; taking it up, however, could hardly be more complex. The five-dimensional approach aims to confront the complexity of this challenge by identifying the socio-ontological foundations of human existence. Here it is assumed that any theoretical framework that strives to justify its critique of society on solid normative grounds needs to identify the ontological foundations which allow for the possibility of human coexistence in the first place. There is no comprehensive critique of society (*Gesellschaftskritik*) without a solid concept of society (*Gesellschaftsbegriff*). Only by locating the normative foundations of critique in the ontological foundations of the social can critical theory succeed in deriving the emancipatory potential of critique from the emancipatory potential of the ordinary social.

## Introduction

### Notes

1. See, for example: Beer 1999; Crossley 2004; Maesschalck 2001; Poupeau 2000; Sintomer 1999a.
2. See, for example: Bidet 1996, p. 137; Bohman 1997, pp. 177–180; Bohman 1999a, pp. 132, 137, 139–140, 150n.9, 151n.21, and 152n.25; Bouchindhomme 1996, p. 149; Bouveresse 2003, p. 120; Dreyfus and Rabinow 1999, p. 84; Eickelpasch 2002, p. 59; Foster 2005, pp. 89, 98, and 104; Kieserling 2000, p. 36; Papilloud 2003, p. 108; Poupeau 2000; Sintomer 1999a; Sintomer 2005, p. 292; Swartz 1997, pp. 252–253, 255n.20, 271, and 286; Thompson 1992, p. 10; Vázquez García 1999, pp. 208–211; Vázquez García 2002, pp. 196–197; Wacquant 1992e, p. 47; Wacquant 1993, pp. 242–243 and 247.
3. Translation from German into English: ‘cognitive interest’.
4. Translation from German into English: ‘life interest’.



## *Part I*

### **The Reflection of Critical Theory: 'Critique of Society' or 'Society of Critique'?**



## Chapter 1

### The Concept of Critical Theory

The concept of critical theory is inevitably controversial. It is controversial not only because both advocates and detractors of critical theory disagree over the exact meaning of the term, but also because the project of critical theory itself *seeks* to be controversial: to be critical means to be contentious. Critical theory is suspicious of any theoretical approach that claims to formulate irrefutable truths. The intrinsically controversial character of critical theory is reflected in its preoccupation with the nature of knowledge.

#### ***i) Knowledge and Critique: Normative Foundations***

Critique constitutes the point of departure of critical theory, for it enables the subject to reflect upon both society and itself as an immanent part of society. The epistemological ambivalence of critical reflection consists in its simultaneous immanence and transcendence: the immanence of the reflective subject stems from the subject's unavoidable embeddedness in society, no matter how vehemently the constitution of a particular society may be rejected; the transcendence of the reflective subject is expressed in the subject's critical distancing from society



when questioning the taken-for-grantedness of the societal given. Even though critique should not be comfortably interpreted as a guarantee of a contradiction-free life, it can nevertheless be regarded as an empowering precondition for the very possibility of social emancipation.

It is the task of critical theory to uncover and problematise the discrepancy between subjects' emancipatory potentials and society's coercive power to deprecate or even repress these potentials. It may appear simple to assume the existence of this discrepancy; it is far more complex, however, to demonstrate<sup>1</sup> that this structural tension really exists and on what grounds it can, and needs to, be criticised. Hence, the fundamental problem of critical theory can be summarised in an equally fundamental question: 'how can critical theory justify itself; how does it ground its own normative standpoint?'<sup>2</sup> In other words, the main difficulty with which we are confronted is to identify and justify the normative foundations of critical theory.<sup>3</sup>

Insofar as 'critical social theory makes the very givenness of the world the object of exploration and analysis'<sup>4</sup>, its preoccupation with reality is motivated by an attitude of reflective distanciation that allows the critical theorist to question<sup>5</sup> the supposedly unquestioned. In order to solidify the discursive construction of critique, however, it needs to be argumentatively justified if it claims to stand for more than an ephemeral articulation of a confused subject. To ground critical theory simply in an act of disagreement would mean to locate it in a discursive vacuum lacking any firm normative basis. No matter how controversial the search for such a normative basis—or *raison d'être*—of critical theory may turn out to be, only by confronting the challenge of identifying the normative foundations of critique can the arbitrariness of the grounds of critical reflection be avoided.

'Every critical social theory is faced with the problem of constituting its grounds for critique.'<sup>6</sup> The fundamental epistemological problem of making the normative foundations of the critical theorist's standpoint explicit is necessarily caught up in a paradoxical situation: the critique of the social reflects the social of critique. This means that the criticising moment needs to comprehend itself as part of the criticised moment if it claims to be truly *sozialkritisch*<sup>7</sup>. No matter how reflectively detached from social reality, the critical theorist stands *within* society, that is, *within* the horizon of social practices. Social critique is not only

concerned with the nature of social practices, but it is a social practice itself. 'The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question.'<sup>8</sup> The Marxian emphasis upon the this-sidedness<sup>9</sup> of human thinking corresponds to the critical theorist's insistence upon the this-sidedness of social critique, for 'critique must comprehend itself as a moment within the situation which it is seeking to supersede [sublate].'<sup>10</sup> Social critique derives its superseding power (*Aufhebungskraft*) from the recognition of its practical immersion in the very situation that it seeks to supersede (*Aufhebungsmoment*). Every reflective attempt to go beyond the given is in vain if we fail to acknowledge that we are always already part of the given.

Recognising that critique is unavoidably embedded in the social, we are forced to accept that the search for the normative foundations of critique is just as controversial as the search for the ontological foundations of the social. Far from representing a straightforward matter, the reflective recognition of its unavoidable permeation by the social is what distinguishes 'critical' theory from 'traditional' theory: whereas the latter implicitly reproduces its social embeddedness, the former explicitly problematises its situatedness in social reality.<sup>11</sup>

In order to problematise our situatedness in social reality we need to question our existential reliance upon normativity. Here, the term 'normativity' is used to refer to the interpersonal establishment of rules and norms. To be more precise, normativity contains five crucial features. (a) Normativity is largely *implicit* in that we, as ordinary actors, are largely unaware of the presuppositional nature of the social horizons in which we are immersed. (b) Normativity is *intersubjective* in that it unavoidably emerges out of the interactions between individuals. (c) Normativity is *regulative* in that it defines and stipulates what is right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate, legitimate or illegitimate, thereby allowing for the possibility of more or less regulated and stable social interaction. (d) Normativity is *value-laden* in that conventional standards are never simply factual but always also prescriptive, transforming the genuinely contingent into the seemingly universal. (e) Normativity is *contestable* in that conventional standards are always—at least potentially—criticisable, negotiable, and transformable. In short, normativity is implicitly, intersubjectively, regulatively, prescriptively, and contestably

established. It is the task of critical theory to question the givenness of the social by problematising the taken-for-grantedness of normativity, including the normativity of its own presuppositional grounds.

Both our outspoken and our silent participation in a social horizon reflect the unavoidable normativity of human existence. Not only theorising in particular and not only thinking in general, but human life as such is normative as it is necessarily realised in the lap of social existence (*im Schoße des gesellschaftlichen Seins*). Human existence cannot escape normativity. Critique is the explicit extension of our implicit normativity. Critique is nothing but reflective normativity. By contrast, tradition is the unreflective extension of implicit normativity. Tradition is nothing but unreflective normativity. Critical theory's tradition of critique stands for a critique of tradition. Only by making the implicit explicit, only by questioning the unquestioned, only by distancing ourselves from the taken-for-granted is it possible to transform the critique of tradition into a tradition of critique. Rather than pretending to articulate a detached critique of and beyond society, critical theory seeks to formulate a situated critique within and through society, a *social* theory based on *social* critique.

A genuinely *social* critical theory aims to locate the normative foundations of critique in the ontological foundations of the social, for the emancipatory potential of critique is worth nothing without the emancipatory potentials of the social itself. Insofar as Habermasian critical theory seeks to derive the normative foundations of critique from the ontological foundations of the social, and insofar as it regards linguistic communication as the ontological foundation of the social, it locates the foundations of critique in the foundations of human communication: our power to criticise arises from our power to communicate; our critical capacity stems from our communicative capacity; critique is embedded in language.

Thus, far from relegating the power of critique to the privileged scholastic sphere of social philosophy removed from ordinary life, the “productive force” of the critical impulse<sup>12</sup> is grounded in ‘the will and consciousness of human beings’<sup>13</sup>. In other words, critique is a privilege not of philosophy but of humanity. *We* are the ground of critique. The power of critique is anchored in the communicative competence of ordinary people, who, as ordinary actors, are capable of ordinary speech

and ordinary interaction. In this sense, the Habermasian philosophy of critique can, more appropriately, be regarded as an anthropology of critique for two main reasons: first, critical capacity is conceived of as a *species-constitutive* capacity and thus as an anthropological invariant; and, second, critical capacity is conceived of as a *species-generative* capacity and hence as an anthropological driving force.

First, as a *species-constitutive* capacity, the capacity to reflect upon the world and ourselves as part of the world constitutes a distinctively human capacity. More specifically, our critical capacity, in the Habermasian sense, represents both an interpretive and an interactive competence. As ‘an interpretive competence’<sup>14</sup> it enables us to step back from our immersion in the world by contemplating and making sense of our life; and as an ‘interactive competence’<sup>15</sup> it permits us to reflect upon our immersion in the world by sharing and exchanging our interpretation of the world with others. As competent interpreters we are meaning-producing entities; and as competent interactors we are meaning-sharing entities.

Second, as a *species-generative* capacity, critique constitutes a self-formative competence. Thus, it describes the distinctively human ability to determine both our personal and our collective life-histories by virtue of critical reflection. Our ‘rational will that allows itself to be determined by good reasons’<sup>16</sup> puts us in the anthropologically privileged position of being able to claim authorship<sup>17</sup> for our personal and collective life-histories. ‘Insofar as the historical subjects, as mature and responsible [*mündig*] individuals, are in essence the subject of history’<sup>18</sup>, their ‘reflective capacity of judgment constructs the progress of history’<sup>19</sup>. We have distanced ourselves from the natural world by approaching the social world: approaching one another we have learned to make history as co-reflective beings. Our ordinary capacity to interpret through interaction and interact through interpretation enables us to make our own history by virtue of our communicatively grounded reflexivity. As reflective actors, we are history-making entities.

To be sure, our critical capacity—both as a species-constitutive and as a species-generative capacity—constitutes an ordinary competence developed in ordinary life. To suggest that critique is embedded in the ‘reflexivity of ordinary language’<sup>20</sup> is to suggest that the normative foundations of critique are situated in the ontological foundations

of ordinary coexistence itself: communicative intersubjectivity. It 'is thereby presupposed that those acting communicatively are *capable of mutual criticism*. But as soon as we equip the actors with *this* capability, we lose our privileged position as observers in relation to the object domain'<sup>21</sup>, for the object domain is always potentially critical of the world and of itself. To assume that we are 'capable of speech and action'<sup>22</sup> is to acknowledge that we are capable of critique and action. Since critical capacity constitutes a fundamental competence of every subject capable of speech and action, the normative foundations of critique can, and must, be derived from the structure of ordinary speech and ordinary action. Critical beyondness always already exists within our ability to speak and act. As critical actors, we are self-constitutive and self-generative entities.

## ***ii) Knowledge and Interest: Normative Discourses***

'The analysis of the connection of knowledge and interest should support the assertion that a radical critique of knowledge is possible only as social theory.'<sup>23</sup> Knowledge can only be understood in relation to interests insofar as it is necessarily produced by society-generating entities, who are situated in social reality and who are driven by human interests. Interests can only be understood in relation to knowledge insofar as they are articulated by meaning-generating entities, who are situated in social reality and who constantly produce and reproduce knowledge.

The interpenetration of knowledge and human interests is context-transcendent in that both unavoidably—that is, in *any* social formation—depend on one another. The human production of knowledge is permeated by the human interest in life, and the human interest in life is permeated by the human production of knowledge. The construction of human knowledge would be unthinkable without the construction of human life, for the social world is an irreducible component of meaning; and the construction of human life would be unthinkable without the construction of knowledge, 'for meaning is an irreducible component of the social world.'<sup>24</sup> Whatever the specificity of the social world to which we belong may be, knowledge can only emerge within the horizon of this world. Our interest in knowledge derives from our interest in life, no matter how implicit, unconscious, and concealed our species-specific

interest-structure may be. The universal *Erkenntnisinteresse* of knowledge reflects the universal *Lebensinteresse* of the human species.

The relation between knowledge and interest manifests itself in the structural differentiation of thought in modern society: the context-transcendence of the structural interpenetration between knowledge and interest is apparent in the institutionalised differentiation of science in the modern era. According to the early<sup>25</sup> Habermasian account of the interpenetration between knowledge and human interests, three scientific spheres have emerged, which are rooted in three different deep-seated cognitive interests of the human condition: first, the ‘*empirical-analytic sciences*’<sup>26</sup> are driven by the ‘*technical* cognitive interest’<sup>27</sup> in producing ‘predictive knowledge’<sup>28</sup>, enabling us to explain and control the physical world; second, the ‘*historical-hermeneutic sciences*’<sup>29</sup> are guided by the ‘*practical* cognitive interest [...] in the preservation and expansion of the intersubjectivity of possible action-orienting mutual understanding’<sup>30</sup>, allowing us to attain ‘a possible consensus among actors’<sup>31</sup> in the social world; and, third, the ‘*critically oriented sciences*’<sup>32</sup> are motivated by the ‘*emancipatory* cognitive interest’<sup>33</sup> in human liberation from ‘dependence on hypostatized powers’<sup>34</sup>, permitting us to pursue and realise our ‘human interest in autonomy and responsibility (*Mündigkeit*)’<sup>35</sup> in relation to the natural world, the social world, and our subjective world.

Far from representing removed and abstract concerns that are driven by the interest in cognition for the sake of cognition only, knowledge-constitutive interests are rooted and pursued in the centre of human life: ordinary existence. Hence, our technical, practical, and critical cognitive interests are not only knowledge-constitutive, but, above all, knowledge-guiding interests (*erkenntnisleitende Interessen*), for they guide our encounter and interaction with the world in ordinary social life: as ordinary actors we seek to control, comprehend, and critique the world in order to find our place in the world. Our encounter with the world (*Weltbegegnung*) is a constant acting *upon*, *with*, and *beyond* the world: controlling, comprehending, and critiquing we transcend our given situatedness in the world (*Weltvorgefundenheit*) by virtue of our self-accomplished inventiveness about the world (*Welterfindbarkeit*). As controlling entities we act *upon* the world (*Weltbearbeitung*); as comprehending entities we act *with* the world (*Weltverarbeitung*); and as critical entities we act *beyond* the world (*Welterarbeitung*).

As purposive, communicative, and reflective beings, we stand both within and outside the horizon of the natural world<sup>36</sup>: we stand *within* the horizon of the natural world insofar as our pursuit of our knowledge-constitutive interests allows us to *preserve* ourselves as a human species; and we stand *outside* the horizon of the natural world insofar as our pursuit of our knowledge-constitutive interests allows us to *invent* ourselves as a human species. In short, we are both a self-preserving *and* a self-generating species. We are thrown into the world *in order to* control, comprehend, and critique; and we throw ourselves back into the world *by* controlling, comprehending, and critiquing. As purposive entities we are oriented towards instrumentality; as communicative entities we are oriented towards intelligibility; and as reflective entities we are oriented towards autonomy.

The significance of our tripartite world-grounded<sup>37</sup> interest-drivenness can be illustrated by looking at the attempt to distinguish ‘traditional theory’ from ‘critical theory’: whereas the former tends to ignore, the latter seeks to problematise the ‘historically situated’<sup>38</sup> nature of our interest-driven rational encounter with the world; whereas the former tends to reduce our encounter with the world to a relation driven by instrumentality, the latter conceives of our encounter with the world *also* as a relation motivated by intelligibility and inspired by a quest for autonomy; whereas according to the former we primarily act *upon* the world, according to the latter we *also* act *with* and *beyond* the world. In short, whereas the former remains caught up in the objectivity of our species-preserving immanence, the latter faces up to the originality of our species-generating transcendence.

Even though it would be naïve to construct a clear-cut programmatic demarcation line between the two types of theories, traditional theory and critical theory can be distinguished from one another in three main respects: first, in terms of their aims and goals (*normative teleology*); second, with regard to their logical or cognitive structure (*normative epistemology*); and, finally, considering the kind of evidence they seek to achieve (*normative methodology*).<sup>39</sup>

1. *Normative Teleology*: Whereas traditional, ‘scientific’ theories ‘have as their aim or goal successful manipulation of the external world’<sup>40</sup>, critical theories ‘aim at emancipation and enlightenment, at making agents aware of hidden coercion’<sup>41</sup>. Hence, the former are pri-



marily driven by instrumental rationality, seeking to explain and control the world; the latter are interested in substantive rationality, endeavouring to enlighten and emancipate the world.

2. *Normative Epistemology*: Whereas traditional theories are ‘objectifying’<sup>42</sup> in the sense that they do not consider themselves to form part of the object-domain under examination, critical theories claim to be ‘reflective’<sup>43</sup> and ‘self-referential’<sup>44</sup> in the sense that they form an integral part of the object domain under examination. Hence, the former pretend to differentiate clearly between the knowing and the known, the observing and the observed realm of inquiry; the latter, by contrast, ‘are always in part about themselves’<sup>45</sup> explicitly accepting their unavoidable embeddedness in social reality.

3. *Normative Methodology*: Whereas traditional theories ‘require empirical confirmation through observation and experiment’<sup>46</sup> in order to prove their own adequacy or inadequacy, critical theories consider critical reflection to be the most fundamental means by which reality is scrutinised. The former claim to be committed to the allegedly objective process of empirical knowledge acquisition; the latter, on the other hand, regard it as indispensable to reflect upon the very process of this knowledge acquisition as such.

In short, traditional and critical theories differ fundamentally in terms of their teleology, epistemology, and methodology. Although the above typology represents an oversimplifying model, it allows us to illustrate the overall implications of the ineluctable link between knowledge and human interests for the project of critical theory. The early Habermasian analysis of the intimate relation between knowledge and human interests stresses the interest-laden nature of knowledge production, which remains unquestioned by traditional theories. The universality of knowledge derives from the *fact* that we necessarily position ourselves in relation to the world. The particularity of knowledge stems from the *ways* in which we position ourselves in relation to the world: instrumentally, intelligibly, and critically. Critical theory demands an awareness of our purposive, communicative, and reflective engagement with the world. The interpenetration of knowledge and interest reflects our tripartite situatedness in the world. Knowledge represents the discursive expression of this interest-laden situatedness.



### **iii) Knowledge and Language: Normative Horizons**

In order to understand the intrinsic normativity of human existence we need to understand its linguisticity (*Sprachlichkeit*). The universality of human existence is revealed in the particularity of one of its most empowering features: the creation of *meaning*. Even the most nihilistic denial of meaning is still articulated in the horizon of meaning: language. Even if we were convinced by the complete meaninglessness of life, this conviction would only reiterate the language-based meaningfulness of human existence, for meaninglessness is only decipherable through meaning.

We are immersed in meaning because we are immersed in the normative horizon of language. Language reflects both the deeply immanent and the deeply transcendent situatedness of human beings in the world. Language is the vehicle of our meaning-permeated immanence, for our understanding of the world and of ourselves is caught up in language. Yet, language is also the vehicle of our meaning-generative transcendence, for we situate ourselves above and beyond ourselves when attaching linguistically articulated meaning to our existence.

In Habermas's words, '[w]hat raises us out of nature is the only thing whose nature we can know: *language*. Through its structure, autonomy and responsibility [*Mündigkeit*] are posited for us. Our first sentence expresses unequivocally the intention of universal and unconstrained consensus.'<sup>47</sup> Regardless of whether or not the consensual nature of language can be proven to be the normative basis of social critique, and notwithstanding whether or not language can be considered to be *the* most fundamental empowering force of human existence, language occupies a unique position in the human universe because it places us in the normative horizon of meaningfulness. The meaningfulness of linguisticity makes us distinctively human. The existence of our linguistic awareness makes the awareness of our existence a challenging task. We literally 'under-stand' our sense of belonging to the horizon of humanity if we realise that, as linguistic entities, we simultaneously 'stand under' and 'stand above' the horizon of existence: every time we produce linguistic meaning about the world, we situate ourselves within the social world and above the natural world.

Every act of speaking makes the act of existing an ambivalent affair: our affair with life becomes an affair with language. The immanent reflexivity of language rebels against the immanence of existence; at the same time, however, the transcendent reflexivity of language, its inherent beyondness, rebels against itself, against its own delimitedness. The irony of language consists in its paradoxical capacity to look at itself through itself. Linguistic beings are capable of self-contemplation because language is capable of self-contemplation: language is a human creation that can contemplate itself through itself. Yet, linguistic contemplation is never simply a private but always already a social act: since language is created intersubjectively, it owes its very existence to human reciprocity. Even if we were to deny human reciprocity, we could only deny it *through* reciprocity, through—our intersubjectively created—language. The linguistic ‘being-in-the-world’<sup>48</sup> is essentially a linguistic ‘being-with-and-through-one-another-in-the-world’. *We* are the horizon.

The centrality of linguistic intelligibility for the constitution of human existence is most firmly recognised by hermeneutics.<sup>49</sup> For hermeneutics regards understanding to be the most distinctive feature of humanity and the main methodological tool for the analytical exploration of humanity. Thus, hermeneutics aims at the explicit *Verstehen*<sup>50</sup> of the implicitly *Verstandene*<sup>51</sup>: in order to understand humanity we need to understand the distinctively human capacity to attribute linguistically articulated meaning to existence.

‘Hermeneutics is universal because understanding is the fundamental way in which human beings participate in the world.’<sup>52</sup> We situate ourselves in the world by attributing meaning to the world; there is no humanity without linguistic intelligibility. ‘The phenomenon of understanding [...] shows the universality of human linguisticity as a limitless medium that carries *everything* within it [...] because everything [...] is included in the realm of “understandings” and understandability in which we move.’<sup>53</sup> Hence, our immersion in the world is only conceivable as an immersion in the search for understanding: the presence of meaningful horizons reflects the unique intelligibility of human existence.

The ‘symbolically mediated character of our relationship with the world’<sup>54</sup> is indicative of our existential dependence on language. Language is the vehicle for the distinctively human signification of the

world: it constitutes 'the framework of fundamental concepts within which we interpret everything that appears in the world in a specific way as something'<sup>55</sup>. Our linguistic world-disclosure (*Weltenthüllung*) cannot escape but only contemplate our existential world-enclosure (*Welteingeschlossenheit*). Through language our enclosure in the world is disclosed before us: our existential enclosure implies that we necessarily exist *within* the world; our linguistic disclosure means that we intelligibly exist *about* the world. The 'within' derives from the simple fact that we 'are' in the world; the 'about' derives from our linguistic ability to be 'aware' of our being in the world.

Language simultaneously delimits and opens our normative horizon. It restricts our normative horizon in that our consciousness moves within the *pregiven* structure of our language; hence, even the most radical form of disagreement is preceded by a tacit form of agreement.<sup>56</sup> It opens our normative horizon in that the structure of our language is ultimately *created* by us; hence, even the most conservative form of human convention owes its existence to an act of human creation. In brief, language is both a structuring and a structured structure. It unavoidably structures our positioning in the world. Yet, at the same time, we structure language; we position ourselves in the world through language. The interdependence of the structuring and the structured moment inherent in language reveals the ambivalent way in which we are placed and simultaneously place ourselves in the world through the normative horizon of language. Critical theory is the explicit awareness of this ambivalence, which permeates the existential horizon of humanity.

## Notes

1. Here I use the English verb 'to demonstrate' as a synonym of the German verb *nachweisen*. The prefix *nach* (meaning: 'after') indicates that the alleged discrepancy between the subject and society exists *before* we start to criticise it. In other words, we demonstrate the existence of this discrepancy *after* discovering, rather than just 'inventing', it.

2. Pleasants 1999, p. 155.

3. The centrality of the problem of the normative foundations of critical theory is extensively emphasised in the literature. See, for example: Finke 2001, esp. p. 172; Held 1980; Pleasants 1999, pp. 153–155; Stirk 2000, pp. 128 and 139; Zemelman 1987, p. 3.

4. Calhoun 1995a, p. 8.

5. Here I use the English verb 'to question' as a synonym of the German verb *hinterfragen*. The prefix *hinter* ('behind') is of crucial importance here because it stresses that what is being 'questioned', or *hinterfragt*, lies under (literally 'behind') the surface level of mere social appearances.

## The Concept of Critical Theory

6. Alexander 1991 [1985], p. 49.
7. Literal translation from German into English: 'socially critical'.
8. Marx 2000/1977 [1845], p. 171.
9. In German: *Diesseitigkeit*.
10. Habermas 1988 [1963]-a, p. 248.
11. I shall come back to this controversial distinction further below. See Horkheimer 1976. See also Habermas 1987 [1981]-p, p. 381: '[...] Horkheimer's programmatic demarcation of critical theory from traditional theory [...]'. See also *ibid.*, p. 401: 'Horkheimer's critique of science in his programmatic essay "Traditional and Critical Theory": "The traditional idea of theory is abstracted from scientific activity as it is carried on within the division of labor [...]. [...] the real social function of science [...]" [...] As opposed to this, critical social theory is to become conscious of the self-referentiality of its calling [...]. The context of its emergence does not remain external to the theory; rather, the theory takes this reflectively up into itself [...]'.
12. Habermas 1988 [1963]-a, p. 240.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Habermas 1987 [1981]-d, p. 118. On the Habermasian notion of 'interpretive competence', see also, for example: Habermas 1987 [1981]-d, pp. 130–131; Habermas 2001 [1984]-f, pp. 126–127.
15. Habermas 1987 [1981]-d, p. 130. On the Habermasian notion of 'interactive competence', see also, for example: Habermas 1988 [1968], p. 145; Habermas 2001 [1984]-f, p. 126; Habermas 2001 [1984]-g, p. 135; Habermas 2001, pp. 71–72.
16. Habermas 2000c, p. 328.
17. On the Habermasian notion of 'authorship', see, for example: Habermas 1988 [1963]-a, pp. 218, 244, and 246–252; Habermas 1987 [1968]-e, pp. 155–157; Habermas 2001, pp. 26–28; Habermas 2004, esp. pp. 871–872, 874–881, 884–887, and 890. See also Cooke 1999, esp. pp. 26–32 and 47–48.
18. Habermas 1988 [1963]-a, p. 246.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Habermas 2000a, p. 17 (my translation). See also Müller-Doohm 2000, p. 84.
21. Habermas 1987 [1981]-d, p. 119 (italics in original).
22. Habermas repeatedly emphasises the central communication-theoretic idea that human beings, unlike animals, can be considered to be 'subjects capable of speech and action' (*sprach- und handlungsfähige Subjekte*). See, for example: Habermas 1988 [1971], p. 9; Habermas 1987 [1981]-c, p. 86; Habermas 1987 [1981]-d, p. 108; Habermas 2001 [1984]-a, p. 9; Habermas 2001 [1984]-b, p. 44; Habermas 2001 [1984]-f, p. 118; Habermas 2000c, p. 343; Habermas 2001, pp. 16, 23–24, and 42; Habermas 2004, p. 879.
23. Habermas 1987 [1968]-k, p. vii.
24. Thompson 1981, p. 107.
25. It should be noted that the 'late' Habermas self-critically distances himself from the schematic and evolutionist character of his 'early' tripartite conception of knowledge-constitutive interests, arguing that this 'early' conception is still caught up in the 'philosophy of the subject', which his 'late' communication-theoretic approach seeks to overcome. See Habermas 2000a, esp. pp. 12–16, 18, and 20.
26. Habermas 1987 [1965/1968], p. 308 (italics in original).
27. *Ibid.* (italics in original).
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*, p. 309 (italics in original).
30. *Ibid.*, p. 310 (italics in original).
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*, p. 308 (italics added).
33. *Ibid.* (italics in original).

34. *Ibid.*, p. 310.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 311.

36. See *ibid.*, p. 313.

37. In German: *weltbezugsbasiert*.

On the early Habermasian tripartite conception of knowledge-guiding interests (*erkenntnisleitende Interessen*), see also: Habermas 1988 [1963]-b; Habermas 1987 [1968]-a; Habermas 1987 [1968]-c, esp. pp. 44–45, 55–56, and 62–63; Habermas 1987 [1968]-d, esp. p. 69; Habermas 1987 [1968]-f, esp. p. 189; Habermas 1987 [1968]-g; Habermas 1988 [1971], esp. pp. 1–24; Habermas 1987 [1972].

In the secondary literature see, for example: Bengoa Ruiz de Azúa 2002 [1992], pp. 129–132; Giegel 2000; Kieserling 2000; McCarthy 1981b, esp. pp. 398–405 and 414; Müller-Doohm 2000, p. 86; Olafson 1990, esp. pp. 643 and 646–647; Overend 1978; Raulet 1996, p. 89; Thyen 2000, esp. p. 526.

38. Habermas 1987 [1981]-f, p. xliii.

39. See Geuss 1981, p. 55. On the distinction between ‘traditional theory’ and ‘critical theory’, see also, for example: Horkheimer 1976; Habermas 1988 [1963]-a, p. 211; Habermas 1987 [1965/1968], p. 302; Habermas 1988 [1971], pp. 2–3.

In the secondary literature see, for example: Bohman 1999b, p. 459; Dallmayr 1992, pp. 121–124; Edgar 2005a, pp. 8–10; Kompridis 2005, p. 299; Leonard 1990, pp. xiii, 3–4, 36–37, and 39; Power 1998, p. 207; Velasco 2003, p. 20.

40. Geuss 1981, p. 55.

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Ibid.*

47. Habermas 1987 [1965/1968], p. 314 (italics in original). For instructive comments on this frequently quoted aphorism of Habermas’s Inaugural Lecture at Frankfurt in 1965 see, for example: Alexander 1991 [1985], p. 53; Créau 1991, pp. 136–137; Davey 1985, p. 123; Ingram 1987, pp. 9 and 17–18; McCarthy 1981b, p. 415; Thompson 1982, pp. 117–118; van den Berg 1980, p. 462; Whitton 1992, pp. 306–307.

See also Habermas 2001 [1984]-e, pp. 102–103: ‘The formal anticipation of idealized conversation [...] guarantees the “ultimate” underlying counterfactual mutual agreement [...]. For with our first act of linguistic communication we must in fact always already be making this presupposition.’

48. See Habermas 1988 [1967/1970]-c, p. 171. In this context Habermas is referring to Gadamer’s notion of *sprachliches Weltverhalten*. See original publication: Habermas 1970a, p. 306.

49. I do not intend to elaborate upon the theory of hermeneutics at this point. Yet, one should be aware of the historically contingent meaning of the term. Drawing our attention to the etymological history of this concept, William Outhwaite points out that ‘the term “hermeneutics” has been used since the eighteenth century to refer to the interpretation of texts. Initially restricted to religious writings, it was gradually extended to classical philology and to linguistic understanding in general.’ In: Outhwaite 1987, p. 62.

50. Literal translation from German into English: ‘understanding’.

51. Literal translation from German into English: ‘the understood’.

52. Outhwaite 1987, p. 62.

53. Gadamer 1976 [1967], p. 25 (italics in original). See also Outhwaite 1987, p. 62.

54. Lafont 1999 [1993], p. 189. Original publication: Lafont 1993, p. 192: ‘[...] el carácter simbólicamente mediado de nuestra relación con el mundo’.

55. Habermas 1987 [1981]-b, p. 58.

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56. This hermeneutic view concurs with Gadamer's claim that 'agreement is prior to disagreement'. See Gadamer 1993 [1986], p. 223. Cf. Lafont 1999 [1993], p. 173.



## Chapter 2

### The Debate over Critical Theory

Critical theory is an explicitly open project, for it is based on the notion of critique. Critique becomes dogmatic if it fails to accept controversy. The controversy over the nature and task of critical theory concerns the possible reconstruction of critical theory. The Habermasian reconstruction of critical theory is motivated by the conviction that critical theory needs to uncover and overcome the aporias inherent in its philosophical presuppositions.

#### ***i) The Aporias of Historical Materialism: The Paradigm of Labour***

Historical materialism can be regarded as a philosophical cornerstone of Habermasian critical theory. Nevertheless, inasmuch as Habermasian critical theory draws upon the insights of historical materialism, the former also distances itself from the latter in some crucial respects. The most controversial debate, with regard to the consolidation of the explicit normative foundations of critical theory, concerns the question of whether the predominant paradigm of Marxian thought should be considered the predominant paradigm of critical theory as well. If, however, critical theory begins to question the most fundamental presuppo-



sitions of historical materialism, then the former can only move *within* the normative horizon of the latter by simultaneously going *beyond* it. In other words, the strengths of the Marxian conception of the social can only be rescued if one is prepared to acknowledge and overcome its inherent weaknesses at the same time.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise the aporias of historical materialism would translate into the aporias of critical theory.

The most significant philosophical problem in Marxian thought is its paradigmatic prioritisation of *labour*. Labour is regarded as the most fundamental anthropological invariant in that it is thought to determine the constitution of society as a whole. A productivist conception of the human species puts our capacity to reproduce ourselves through the act of labour at centre stage. The simple insight that people have to work in order to exist represents the categorical imperative of the Marxian view of the world. The Marxian *Weltanschauung* is one of *Weltbearbeitung*. What we need to observe in the world is how we work upon the world if we claim to understand what underlies it. According to this view, human existence is essentially a *bearbeitende Existenz*, that is, an existence that constantly works upon and reinvents itself through the self-formative act of labour.

The normative foundations of critical theory are to be derived from the ontological foundations of human coexistence if our critique of society seeks to justify itself on the grounds of society itself. Hence, what are the foundations of the social? The search for an answer to this complex question leads us to a critical reflection upon the Marxian paradigm of labour. Even though historical materialism and critical theory, in the Habermasian sense, share the view that the human species distinguishes itself from other species by being an essentially self-constitutive and self-generative species, they differ as to what this self-constitutive and self-generative uniqueness of the human species exactly consists of. Following Habermas, the major theoretical weakness of the Marxian approach stems from its central assumption that labour constitutes *the* ontological foundation of any social order. According to the Habermasian critique of historical materialism, the validity of this anthropological presupposition needs to be questioned because it contains at least three intimately interrelated forms of reductionism: (a) productivist reductionism, (b) instrumentalist reductionism, and (c) positivist reductionism.

(a) A productivist view of the human species reduces the symbolic dimensions to the material dimensions of social life; reflection is interpreted as a mere epiphenomenon of production. 'By reducing the self-positing of the absolute ego to the more tangible productive activity of the species, he [Marx] eliminates reflection as such as a motive force of history [...]. *Marx conceives of reflection according to the model of production.*'<sup>2</sup> Hence, humanity is born not in the moment of reflection, but in the moment of production.

(b) An instrumentalist view of the human species regards our capacity to develop a purposive relationship with the natural world—that is, our ability to gain technical control over our environment—as the most constitutive feature of social life; human action is characterised by instrumentality. 'Marx reduces the process of reflection to the level of instrumental action [...], reflective knowledge (*Reflexionswissen*) changes into productive knowledge (*Produktionswissen*).'<sup>3</sup> Consequently, humanity fundamentally constitutes itself not by virtue of communicative rationality (*kommunikative Rationalität*), but by virtue of instrumental rationality (*Zweckrationalität*).

(c) A positivist view of the human species equates the rules that govern natural life with the rules that govern social life. According to this perspective, the scientific analytical tools that allow us to understand the natural world also enable us to comprehend the social world. 'At the level of self-consciousness of social subjects, knowledge that makes possible the control of natural processes turns into knowledge that makes possible the control of the social life process. [...] This demand for a natural science of man, with its positivist overtones, is astonishing.'<sup>4</sup> Thus, humanity is viewed not as transcending, but as still standing completely within the horizon of the natural world.

Attempting to 'free historical materialism from its philosophical ballast'<sup>5</sup>, Habermas aims to reconstruct Marxist social theory. Equating the nature of the social with labour means simplifying the complexity of the social within an—at least tacitly—productivist, instrumentalist, and positivist theoretical framework. The complexification of the normative foundations of critical theory, by contrast, reflects the methodological effort to acknowledge the complexity of the social. It is true that 'the Marxian concept of social labor is suitable for delimiting the mode of life of the hominids from that of the primates; but it does not

capture the specifically human reproduction of life.<sup>6</sup> For the specificity of human life is based both on purposive-rational action through a system of social production that presupposes labour *and* 'on symbolically mediated interaction [...] through a system of social norms that presupposes language.'<sup>7</sup>

In other words, from the very beginning, human existence is permeated by the power of both labour *and* interaction<sup>8</sup>; that is, humanity is only conceivable as both a cooperative *and* a communicative form of existence. 'We can assume that the developments that led to the specifically human form of reproducing life—and thus to the initial state of social evolution—first took place in the structures of labor and language. *Labor and language are older than man and society.*'<sup>9</sup> Contrary to a productivist view of the social, the self-formative nature of humanity is due to both our productive *and* our communicative nature. Contrary to an instrumentalist view of the social, human evolution is driven by both purposive-rational *and* communicative action. Contrary to a positivist view of the social, the human world must be distinguished from the natural world because we are both tool-making *and* meaning-creating entities.

Thus, according to the early Habermasian ontology of the social, the history of human ontology is driven by both labour *and* language: production and communication constitute two irreducible driving forces of the social. In order to do justice to the complexity of the social, the aporias of a monolithic labour-focused approach need to be overcome by exploring both the productive *and* the communicative nature of human existence. Critical theory needs to face up to the multilayered constitution of the social. The more complex the ontological foundations of the social, the more complex the normative foundations of critique turn out to be. Avoiding the aporias of a monolithic theoretical paradigm, we need to take on the challenge of this complexity.

## ***ii) The Aporias of Early Critical Theory: The Paradigm of Instrumental Reason***

To the extent that the aporias of historical materialism are derived from the paradigmatic prioritisation of labour, the aporias of early critical theory are rooted in its obsession with instrumental reason. The irony

of this paradigmatic fixation consists in a tacit form of defeatism: the triumph of instrumental reason, its consolidation as the predominant form of modern reason, is only reinforced by ascribing programmatic priority to the problematisation of its existence. The more we limit our analysis of the social to its permeation by instrumentality, the more we seem to rule out the possibility of an emancipated society. The stronger our preoccupation with instrumental rationality, the weaker becomes our hope to transcend the ubiquity of instrumentality.

To be sure, the ubiquity of instrumental reason in modern society should not be underestimated, let alone denied; yet, the omnipresence of instrumental reason can only be challenged if we are able to demonstrate the universality of an alternative, diametrically opposed, form of reason: of social reason, of intersubjective reason, of reciprocal reason, that is, in Habermasian terms, of communicative reason. To put it more radically, the historical universality of instrumental reason needs to be counterbalanced by the ontological universality of communicative reason. The predominant form of modern reason leads us to be instrumental although we are essentially communicative; the predominant form of human reason is communicative although we are seduced to be instrumental. This tension between instrumental and communicative reason describes the major normative division in modern society, and its problematisation represents the major programmatic division in modern critical theory.

The Habermasian reformulation of critical theory is an ambitious project in that it seeks to provide solid normative grounds for social critique. In order to make the normative grounds of critical theory explicit, we are obliged not only to diagnose, but also to abandon the epistemological vacuum of early critical theory.<sup>10</sup> Within the Habermasian framework, this epistemological posture of seeking to obtain a 'passport for critique' has at least three decisive theoretical implications. (a) *Communicative rationality* is regarded as the *basis of critique*, indicating that human coexistence is a discursive affair. (b) *Action rationality* needs to be distinguished from *system rationality*, revealing that human coexistence is a coordinative affair. (c) *Communicative action* describes the ontological foundation of the social, suggesting that human coexistence is both a discursive and a coordinative affair and thereby setting the stage for critical theory to fill its normative vacuum with the emancipatory potential inherent in the communicative foundations of society.

(a) The type of rationality that declares the coexistential nature of humanity to be its starting point is *communicative rationality*. Whereas instrumental rationality is driven by our interest in controlling our environment, communicative rationality is driven by our interest in mutual understanding allowing us to mediate our relationship with our environment by virtue of linguistic intelligibility. Instrumental rationality takes the interest in control for granted; communicative rationality, by contrast, enables us to question the very taken-for-grantedness of this interest through the critical force of argumentative discourse. Rationality is the product of our linguistic encounter with the world. Since rationality is embedded in language and since language is intersubjectively generated, rationality is unavoidably permeated by the constitution of the social: our dependence upon mutual understanding stems from our dependence upon one another. Rationality is not absolved from but immersed in the social. The positivist illusion of value-freeness loses the smallest amount of validity if we recognise the intrinsically social character of rationality. Both communicative *and* instrumental rationality arise from human reciprocity; but whereas the latter only applies the socially constructed normativity of language for the purpose of control, the former enables us to question the very existence of this normativity through discursive reflexivity. We cannot escape normativity; but only communicative rationality can make this normativity explicit by questioning its very existence through the discursive force of intersubjective argumentation. Communicative rationality is the epitome of the social reflecting upon itself, the social 'for-itself'. As such, it forms the basis of social critique.

(b) The type of rationality that is immersed in the cradle of its existence, the social, is *action rationality*. Action rationality reveals the immediacy of ordinary human practices. To derive the normative foundations of critique from the ontological foundations of the social means to ground critique in ordinary human coexistence. The immediacy of human coexistence is reflected in the lifeworld. Everyday life is the life of everybody. Early critical theory, however, 'failed to recognize the communicative rationality of the lifeworld that had to develop out of the rationalization of worldviews before there could be any development of formally organized domains of action at all.'<sup>11</sup> Yet, we need to 'expand the critique of instrumental reason into a critique of functionalist reason'<sup>12</sup>

in order to recognise that the emancipatory potential of communicative reason, which is always already located in ordinary human coexistence, can challenge the power of functionalist reason, which permeates the logic of systemic social structures. Only by drawing a careful distinction between system rationality and action rationality can communicative rationality be located in the core realm of the social: ordinary coexistence. A critical theory that does not succeed in overcoming the 'confusion of system rationality and action rationality'<sup>13</sup> fails to identify the normative foundations of critique because it does not identify the communicative foundations of ordinary social practices. In order to do justice to the communicative foundations of the social we need to locate the coordinative force of language in the immediacy of our everyday practices. Action rationality is the epitome of the existing social within itself, the social 'in-itself'. As such, it forms the basis of social practices.

(c) The type of action that lies at the heart of ordinary coexistence is *communicative action*. Human coexistence is unthinkable without human communication. The interrelation between the 'communicative' and the 'active' aspect of rationality leads us to the fundamental notion of *communicative action*, or, to put it pleonastically, *active communication*. Only by uncovering the intimate interrelation between the communicative and the active nature of human existence can the foundations of critique be derived from the foundations of the social itself. Communicative rationality is nothing but the ultimate expression of intersubjective discursiveness: it describes the human condition as a fundamentally interdependent and reflective condition. Action rationality is nothing but the ultimate expression of intersubjective praxis: it describes human life as a fundamentally practical and coordinative life. Communication needs action just as much as action needs communication. Communication and action go hand in hand. Interacting human subjects make society possible as communicating human subjects. Communicative action describes our distinctively human capacity to discuss and coordinate our actions by virtue of language. Thus, it is the epitome of the discursively and coordinatively existing social, the social 'for-and-in-itself'. As such, its discursive power forms the normative basis of social critique and its coordinative power forms the ontological basis of social practices.

In summary, Habermas seeks to overcome the fatalistic pessimism of early critical theory by insisting upon the emancipatory potential and ordinary reality of communicative action. As the normative cornerstone of critique, communicative rationality grounds critique in the discursive power of intersubjective argumentation. As the ordinary cornerstone of social practices, action rationality grounds the social in the coordinative power of quotidian intersubjectivity. As the ontological cornerstone of human coexistence, communicative action raises itself out of the social by standing within it: the coordinative ‘in-itself’ converts itself into the discursive ‘for-itself’ by recognising the practical immanence of its reflective transcendence.

***iii) The Aporias of Philosophical Hermeneutics: The Paradigm of Language***

The incorporation of hermeneutics into critical theory transforms ‘philosophical hermeneutics’ into ‘critical hermeneutics’<sup>14</sup>. This epistemological transformation is motivated by the Habermasian insight that language can only, and must always, be understood in relation to society. In order to uncover the intertwinement of language and society we need to face up to (a) the complexity of the social, (b) the immediacy of the social, (c) the transformability of the social, (d) the ubiquity of the social, and (e) the contestability of the social.

*(a) Language and the Complexity of the Social*

Critical hermeneutics acknowledges the complexity of the social in that it is guided by the conviction that even though language constitutes a fundamental realm of social reality the latter cannot be reduced to the former. Hence, ‘language is regarded as one among several dimensions of social life’<sup>15</sup>. The multilayered constitution of social reality must not be reduced to language. To the extent that critical hermeneutics can be regarded as ‘the elaboration of a critical and rationally justified theory for the interpretation of human action’<sup>16</sup>, it is strongly opposed to any form of ‘hermeneutic idealism’<sup>17</sup> or ‘linguistic transcendentalism’<sup>18</sup> that reduces human action to language. This is not to deny that language represents one of the most important socio-ontological foundations of human action. It means that neither the multifaceted character

of human action nor the complexity of social reality can be reduced to language.

*(b) Language and the Immediacy of the Social*

Critical hermeneutics emphasises the immediacy of the social, for it regards the constitution of language as a product of social *praxis*, of communicative *action*. Critical hermeneutics is social hermeneutics in that it regards the interpretation of language as an interpretation of action. *Sprachkritik* is a form of *Sozialkritik*: 'The approach of linguistic analysis to the realm of social action is plausible only if internal relationships among symbols always imply relationships among actions. The grammar of languages would then be, in accordance with its immanent sense, a system of rules that determines connections between communication *and* possible praxis.'<sup>19</sup> The immediacy of language reflects the immediacy of the social: even the most abstract, formalised, and codified scientific language is ultimately derived from the concrete, spontaneous, and intuitive ordinary language of everyday life. Thus, 'everyday language is the ultimate metalanguage, [...] it is not only language but also practice.'<sup>20</sup> The lifeworld is the ultimate metaworld. Ordinary language communication is derived from ordinary coexistence. The lifeworld constitutes the cradle of language. Language represents an intelligibly mediated expression of human praxis. As such, it is just as ordinary as human existence itself. 'Understanding language is the virtual recapitulation of a process of socialization.'<sup>21</sup> Language reveals that the human *Dasein* is a human *Miteinandersein*. The *da* is just as immediate as the *miteinander*. We are 'there' by being 'with one another'.

*(c) Language and the Transformability of the Social*

Critical hermeneutics recognises the transformability of the social, comprehending language as both a structuring *and* a structured structure. Paradoxically, the 'within' of language enables us to go 'beyond' it. 'Horizons are *open*, and they shift; we wander into them and they in turn move with us.'<sup>22</sup> Thus, although we do move within the horizons, they also follow us. The categorical openness of linguistic horizons reflects the societal openness of humanity. The *vollkommene Unvollkommenheit*<sup>23</sup> of linguistically established horizons exposes the radical transformability of the social. To regard the social world as the totality of externalised



subjectivities means to acknowledge that the social is ultimately made by the human subjects themselves, by *us*: we are the social. The ‘absolutization of tradition’<sup>24</sup>, by contrast, inevitably leads to hermeneutic conservatism, which hypostatizes the structuring power of structure, thereby denying the structuring power of human speakers. The result is the total disempowerment of speaking subjects, who disappear in the powerful horizon of the linguistic background assumptions. ‘Indeed, the very point of the “thesis of the background” is that subjects think and act on the basis of a largely implicit and unreflective preunderstanding.’<sup>25</sup> This ‘back-ground’, however, has to be ‘grounded back’ to the intersubjective production of language performed *by* subjects. Critical hermeneutics does not deny the existence of the prejudgmental structure (*Vorurteilsstruktur*) of language. Yet, it stubbornly insists that it is precisely this prejudgmental structure of language which reveals the reflexive and creative power of language: *we*, the human species, have created language—and we create and recreate it on a daily basis. The omnipresence of the background does not necessarily prove its omnipotence. We unavoidably speak within the ‘hitherto-existing’<sup>26</sup>, but by *speaking* we do so also within the ‘always-still-and-always-again-becoming’<sup>27</sup>. This becoming reflects the transformability of the social.

*(d) Language and the Ubiquity of the Social*

Critical hermeneutics confronts the ubiquity of the social by reflecting upon both the interpreted and the interpreting moment of its analysis. Thereby, it faces up to a fundamental paradox of hermeneutic analysis: uncovering the *Vorurteilsstruktur* of language, critical hermeneutics is aware of its own *Vorurteilsstruktur*. The reproduction of linguistic background assumptions takes place even when we make the implicit explicit, even when we reflect upon the unreflected, even when we problematise the unproblematised. The omnipresence of the background is rooted in the ubiquity of the social, the ubiquity of intersubjectively created horizons. The ubiquity of the social means that the critique of the social should always imply self-critique and that hermeneutic interpretation must always involve self-interpretation.<sup>28</sup> Just as ‘it is essential to educate the educator himself’<sup>29</sup>, it is essential to reflect upon the reflecting subject, for the criticising moment forms as much part of society as the moment criticised. Reflection is always already pre-reflection

derived from the reflecting subject's unproblematic background; yet, it must also always be self-reflection aimed at the problematisation of this background. Self-education is self-problematisation. The hermeneutic outsider is unavoidably also the hermeneutic insider of his or her own contextual horizon.<sup>30</sup> The linguisticity of the interpreted is analysed by virtue of the linguisticity of the interpreter. Critical hermeneutics looks coexistentiality right in its eyes when it admits to the ubiquity of the social.

*(e) Language and the Contestability of the Social*

Critical hermeneutics reminds us of the contestability of the social by problematising the interpenetration of power and language. Far from representing a transcendental, pure realm of reflexivity, language represents a social 'dimension which may be deformed through the exercise of power'<sup>31</sup>. Language cannot step out of the horizon of social practices. Inasmuch as the social world is permeated by power relations, language, as a constitutive part of social reality, is impregnated with these power relations. 'Language is *also* a medium of domination and social power.'<sup>32</sup> Language cannot be reduced to an epiphenomenon of power relations, but the former cannot be understood without the latter either. The point is to uncover the power mechanisms that penetrate language: 'critical hermeneutics undertakes to lay out a concept of reflexivity-in-interpretation that allows the individual to distance herself from the taken-for-granted background of symbolic assumptions and social practices. The critical practice of self-distanciation is to bring about a heightened sense of self-understanding, an enlightened insight into usually *hidden linkages between symbolic relations and social networks of power*. Such critical practice aims at a reflexive understanding of the usually unnoticed implications of meaning in the *reproduction of social power mechanisms*.'<sup>33</sup> Power relations are not necessarily reproduced consciously; on the contrary, their very efficiency is due to their unconscious, unproblematised, and unnoticed reproduction: 'what is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying'<sup>34</sup>. The silence of power is reproduced through the speaking of subjects.

## Notes

1. Habermas repeatedly stresses the alleged need to reconstruct historical materialism, as part of his general reconstruction of critical theory, in his writings. See, for example: Habermas 1988 [1963]-a, esp. pp. 195–198, 205, 230, 237–242, and 252; Habermas 1988 [1963]-b, p. 262; Habermas 1988 [1968], esp. pp. 143 and 168–169; Habermas 1987 [1968]-a, p. 5; Habermas 1987 [1968]-b, pp. 25–36 and 39–42; Habermas 1987 [1968]-c, pp. 44–48 and 54–63; Habermas 1987 [1968]-g, pp. 197 and 210–211; Habermas 1988 [1971], pp. 26–27; Habermas 1984 [1976]-b, esp. pp. 131–138, 140–143, 148, 160, 163, 167–169, and 177; Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, p. 132; Habermas 1987 [1981]-o, esp. pp. 334–343; Habermas 1987 [1981]-p, p. 383; Habermas 1982, pp. 220–229; Habermas 1987 [1985]-b, esp. p. 82.

The Habermasian proposal to reconstruct critical theory through a sympathetic but critical reformulation of historical materialism is widely emphasised in the literature. See, for example: Antonio 1989, pp. 725–732; Beer 1999, pp. 84, 97, and 122; Brookfield 2005, pp. 1129–1130; Créau 1991, pp. 31–32, 82, and 140; Edgar 2005b; Haber 1998; Horowitz 1998, pp. 4–5; How 2003, pp. 134–140; McCarthy 1981a; Owen 2002, pp. 51–62; Raulet 1996, pp. 74 and 85; Rockmore 1989, esp. pp. 1–17 and 90–110; Sintomer 1999b; Thompson 1981, pp. 73–76; Tomberg 2003, esp. pp. 293, 301, and 309; van Gelder 1990, esp. pp. 140–179; Velasco 2003, p. 21; Wellmer 1977 [1976], esp. pp. 233–234, 244–248, and 256–262.

2. Habermas 1987 [1968]-c, p. 44 (italics in original).

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 44 and 47.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 47 and 46.

5. Habermas 1987 [1981]-p, p. 383.

6. Habermas 1984 [1976]-b, p. 135.

7. Habermas 1976, p. 150 (italics removed from ‘language’) (my translation). In the English edition, the German present tense of ‘*bereits beruht*’ and ‘*voraussetzt*’ is translated into the English past tense of ‘was already based’ and ‘presupposed’; in addition, the German preposition ‘*durch*’ is translated into the English preposition ‘by’, rather than ‘through’. See Habermas 1984 [1976]-b, p. 136.

8. On the early Habermasian distinction between labour and interaction, see, for example, Habermas 1988 [1968]. In the secondary literature, see, for example: Bernstein 1995, pp. 41–44; Créau 1991, pp. 48–57; Giddens 1982; Outhwaite 1994, pp. 13–19; Tomberg 2003, pp. 293–314.

9. Habermas 1984 [1976]-b, p. 137 (italics in original).

10. See Moritz 1992, p. 160: ‘Aus dieser Argumentation rekonstruiert Habermas eine Leerstelle in *Kritischer Theorie*, die dadurch zu füllen sei, daß begründet würde, wie “kritisches Denken selber zu rechtfertigen sei”. Indem Habermas auf die Notwendigkeit dringt, daß “wir Rechtsgründe der Kritik namhaft” zu machen hätten, stellt er zunächst die Forderung auf, daß eine kritische Gesellschaftstheorie die normativen Implikationen ihrer Grundbegriffe auszuweisen habe. Das erhobene methodologische Postulat deutet zugleich an, daß eine Theorie der Gesellschaft, die dieser Forderung nicht genügt, möglicherweise den Anspruch wissenschaftlicher Erkenntnis zurückschraubt.’ (Italics in original.) [Moritz quotes Habermas from: Habermas 1981/1971 [1963/1969], p. 175.]

The Habermasian proposal to reconstruct early critical theory in order to overcome its presumed inability to provide explicit normative foundations for its critique of society is repeatedly emphasised in the literature. See, for example: Antonio 1989, pp. 722, 725–730, and 742; Brookfield 2005, p. 1130; Créau 1991, p. 29; Crespi 2004, p. 5; Dallmayr 1992, pp. 132–138 and 142; Dodd 1999, pp. 106–120; Edwards 2004, p. 116; Greig 2004, p. 228; Honneth 1996, p. 215; How 1985, pp. 133–134; How 2003, pp. 43–59; Ingram 1990, pp. 136–137; Ipperciel 2003, p. 47; Johnson 1993, pp. 74–75; Kieserling 2000, p. 39; Kompridis 2005, p. 299; Lemieux 1992, pp. 26–28; Mendelson 1979, pp. 46–49 and 70; Müller-Doohm 2005, pp. 277–278; Nielsen

2002, pp. 80–81; Power 1998, p. 208; Raulet 1996, p. 69; Raulet 2003, esp. p. 47; Ray 1993, pp. xiii–ix and 24; Ray 2004, pp. 309–315; Reese-Schäfer 2001, pp. 145–148; Rockmore 1989, p. 94; Thomassen 2005, pp. 548–549; Velasco 2003, pp. 19–28; Whitebook 1979, pp. 41, 66, and 68.

11. Habermas 1987 [1981]-o, p. 333.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 334.—Attention should be drawn to the emphasis placed on this paradigmatic shift in the subtitle of the second volume of Habermas's masterpiece, *The Theory of Communicative Action: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* (in the original publication: *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns. Zur Kritik der funktionalistischen Vernunft*).
13. *Ibid.*, p. 333.
14. On the notion of 'critical hermeneutics', see, for example: Bubner 1988 [1973], esp. pp. 103–106; Davey 1985, esp. pp. 112–114, 121, 123, and 126–127; Delanty 1997, pp. 42 and 57–58; Kögler 1996 [1992], esp. pp. 87, 98, 105–109, 131, 157, 161, 171–172, 179, and 251–275; Kögler 1996, pp. 34 and 38; McCarthy 1982, esp. pp. 57–59 and 78; Outhwaite 1987, pp. 61–76 and 92–107; Thompson 1981, esp. pp. 2–4 and 105–109. On the Habermasian critique of 'philosophical hermeneutics', see, for example: Habermas 1988 [1967/1970]-b; Habermas 1971a; Habermas 1971b.
15. Thompson 1981, p. 3.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
17. See Habermas 1988 [1967/1970]-a, esp. p. 132; and Habermas 1988 [1967/1970]-b, esp. pp. 166–170. See also Wellmer 1977 [1976], pp. 252–258.
18. See Habermas 1988 [1967/1970]-a, p. 119.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 118 (italics in original).
20. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Habermas 1988 [1967/1970]-b, p. 147 (italics added).
23. Literal translation from German into English: 'the complete incompleteness'.
24. Lafont 1999 [1993], p. 136.
25. Kögler 1996 [1992], p. 257.
26. In German: *im Schoße des Bisherdagewesenen*.
27. In German: *im Schoße des Immer-Noch-und-Immer-Wieder-Werdenden*.
28. This twofold hermeneutic task of interpretation and self-interpretation is nicely captured in Anthony Giddens's notion of a 'double hermeneutic'. See, for example: Giddens 1977a, pp. 12 and 28; Giddens 1977b, p. 151. On Habermas's sympathetic discussion of Giddens's notion of a 'double hermeneutic', see Habermas 1987 [1981]-d, p. 110.
29. Marx 2000/1977 [1845], p. 172.
30. Cf. Habermas 1988 [1967/1970]-b, p. 161: '[...] it is the particular achievement of hermeneutic understanding that in relation to the successful appropriation of tradition it has also made clear and accessible to reflection the prejudices that attach to the initial situation of the interpreter.'
31. Thompson 1981, p. 3.
32. Habermas 1988 [1967/1970]-c, p. 172 (italics in original).
33. Kögler 1996 [1992], pp. 251–252 (italics added).
34. Bourdieu 1977 [1972], p. 167. (The second part of this sentence, 'goes without saying because it comes without saying', is italicised in the English edition.)



## Chapter 3

### The Paradigm Shift within Critical Theory

The Habermasian paradigm shift is motivated by one crucial philosophical ambition: to identify the normative foundations of critical theory. ‘The paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness is exhausted. If this is so, the symptoms of exhaustion should dissolve with the transition to the paradigm of mutual understanding.’<sup>1</sup> The exact content of this paradigm shift needs to be elucidated; it has had a far-reaching impact upon contemporary debates in social theory and is often referred to in the literature.<sup>2</sup> No attempt shall be made here to embrace the entire complexity of the Habermasian paradigm shift. Instead, the present chapter concentrates only on a few dimensions that illustrate how the explicit search for the normative foundations of critical thought is inseparably linked to the exploration of the ontological foundations of the social.

#### ***i) The Reconstruction of Historical Materialism: Lifeworld and System***

The Habermasian reconstruction of historical materialism contains a rigorous reformulation of the conceptual tools used to capture the

complex nature of the social. Two key concepts lie at the heart of the Habermasian architecture of the social: the lifeworld and the system. Thus, the following section shall elucidate (a) the concept of the lifeworld, (b) the concept of the system, and (c) their interrelation.

*(a) The Lifeworld*

The notion of the lifeworld can be regarded as an integral component of the paradigm shift from subject-centred to communicative reason because, following Habermas, it constitutes the ontological base of society. Hence, any kind of social formation, no matter how developed its systemic structures may be, is ultimately rooted in the lifeworld, the socio-historically situated realm of ordinary coexistence. To ground the ontology of the social in the ordinary means doing justice to the ontology of human life. The lifeworld represents an indispensable yet fragile core of human coexistence: it is indispensable because no form of human existence is possible without it; it is also fragile, however, because its constitution has been fundamentally undermined by modern society. The autonomy of human life always depends on the autonomy of the lifeworld. The heteronomy of the latter necessarily implies the heteronomy of the former.

We need a theoretically constituted perspective to be able to treat communicative action as the medium through which the lifeworld as a whole is reproduced. [...] Of course, interaction participants then no longer appear as originators who master situations with the help of accountable actions, but as the products of the traditions in which they stand, of the solidary groups to which they belong, and of the socialization processes within which they grow up. This is to say that the lifeworld reproduces itself to the extent that these three functions, which transcend the perspectives of the actors, are fulfilled: the propagation of cultural traditions, the integration of groups by norms and values, and the socialization of succeeding generations. [...] [They] are the properties of communicatively structured lifeworlds in general.<sup>3</sup>

Hence, the three pillars of the lifeworld are (i) culture, (ii) society, and (iii) personality. (i) Culture represents 'the store of knowledge from which those engaged in communicative action draw interpretations'<sup>4</sup>.

Hence, culture constitutes the *interpretive* background of the lifeworld. (ii) Society refers to ‘the legitimate orders from which those engaged in communicative action gather a solidarity, based on belonging to groups, as they enter into interpersonal relationships with one another.’<sup>5</sup> Thus, society forms the *integrative* background of the lifeworld. (iii) Finally, personality entails the ‘acquired competences that render a subject capable of speech and action and hence able to [...] maintain his own identity in the shifting contexts of interaction.’<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, personality provides the *identitarian* background of the lifeworld.

In short, the combination of the interpretive, integrative, and identitarian dimensions forms the structural background of ordinary human coexistence. As the three most crucial components of the lifeworld they are only conceptually separable; ontologically—that is, in the context of ordinary life—they are inseparable.<sup>7</sup> The human social is simultaneously reproduced through the interpretive, integrative, and identitarian elements of the lifeworld. The lifeworld constitutes the most fundamental resource of the social: without the lifeworld any social order would collapse. Hence, ‘social praxis is no longer thought of primarily as a labor process. The complementary concepts of communicative action and lifeworld introduce a difference’<sup>8</sup> according to which the foundation of the social is to be located in the communicative nature of the lifeworld.

Given the ontological primacy ascribed to the lifeworld within the Habermasian architecture of the social, its structural composition needs to be examined in more detail. The Habermasian conception of the lifeworld contains five key dimensions that determine the very nature of the lifeworld: (i) the transcendentality of the lifeworld, (ii) the tangibility of the lifeworld, (iii) the teleology of the lifeworld, (iv) the translatability of the lifeworld, and (v) the totality of the lifeworld.

(i) The Transcendentality of the Lifeworld

The transcendentality of the lifeworld describes its *universal* presence in any kind of society beyond its cultural and historical specificity. Our immersion in life is, anywhere in the world and at any time in human history, an immersion *in* society that can only be experienced through our immersion in a historically situated lifeworld. In other words, whether a particular form of society can be characterised as premodern or modern, primitive or complex, undeveloped or developed, tight



or loose, horizontally structured or vertically structured, control-based or freedom-based, collectivist or individualist—*any* form of society is necessarily based on the lifeworld. Society without a lifeworld would be the absence of society. Hence, the ‘claim to universality of lifeworld analysis’<sup>9</sup> is nothing but the claim to the universality of the social: ‘once we introduce the concept of the lifeworld in communication-theoretical terms, the idea of approaching *any* society whatsoever by means of it is not at all trivial. The burden of truth for the *universal validity* of the lifeworld concept—a validity reaching *across* cultures and epochs—shifts then to the complementary concept of communicative action.’<sup>10</sup> To recognise the transcendental status of the lifeworld means to acknowledge that no human life form whatsoever could possibly emerge without its situatedness in the lifeworld. We all exist *in* our lifeworld.<sup>11</sup>

(ii) The Tangibility of the Lifeworld

The tangibility of the lifeworld is expressed in its *immediate* presence in our everyday existence. Our immersion in life is, above all, an immersion *through* society. Human life experience (*Lebenserfahrung*) is, by definition, a social experience (*Gemeinschaftserfahrung*). Since we can experience society only through our immediate encounter with other human beings, the tangible realm of *Gemeinschaft* attains ontological primacy over the intangible realm of *Gesellschaft*: no intersubjective encounter can take place without a commonly encountered place of intersubjectivity. The Schutzian distinction<sup>12</sup> between our *Umwelt*, which is composed of our *Mitmenschen* (‘consociates’), and our *Mitwelt*, which is composed of our *Nebenmenschen* (‘contemporaries’), forcefully captures the ontological divergence between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. My *Mitmenschen* are ‘people whom I can understand (a) immediately, without need of conscious inference, (b) whom I address as “You” in the familiar singular or plural forms, and (c) as persons with whom I can expect to join in prolonged sequences of interaction over time, “face-to-face”’<sup>13</sup>. My *Nebenmenschen*, on the other hand, are abstract, nameless, and ephemeral beings ‘whom I experience only mediately and discontinuously as anonymous “third persons” representing abstract types’<sup>14</sup>. The only way we can be *in* the world is *through* our immediate world, for only through our immediate world can we develop our species-constitutive and species-generative competences of speech

and interaction. Our interactive competences are worth nothing without an interactively shared and immediately accessible space of intersubjectivity. We all exist in and *through* our lifeworld.<sup>15</sup>

(iii) The Teleology of the Lifeworld

The teleology of the lifeworld manifests itself in its *communicatively* structured presence in our lives. Our immersion in life is, above all, an immersion *towards* society. Acting towards reaching understanding<sup>16</sup> means acting towards society. Communicative action is social action. The complementarity of the lifeworld and communicative action is rooted in the understanding-oriented primacy of human relations. The comprehensibility of the world would be nothing without the intelligibility of language. We have succeeded in understanding the world by understanding one another. We have raised ourselves out of nature by situating ourselves within the nature of linguistic communication. The linguistically based socialisation of human nature has made the communicative social natural to us. The naturalness (*Natürlichkeit*) of our communicatively structured self-positioning in the world has made us forget about the originality of our communicative—that is, understanding-oriented—condition when transforming our ‘acting-towards-one-another’ into an ‘acting-against-one-another’ in strategically motivated social actions. Yet, to accept the primacy of our communicative condition means to acknowledge that even the most anti-social action is derived from our ontological obligation to act socially, that is, to act *in relation to* one another. Paradoxically, even when we act against the other, we act towards the other; even when we act against society, we act towards it. Only by recognising the power of mutual understanding can we explain the very existence and continuous reproduction of society: the possibility of social order is based on the human necessity to act *towards* one another. Acting towards one another, we have created and constantly reproduce our lifeworld. We all exist in, through, and *towards* our lifeworld.<sup>17</sup>

(iv) The Translatability of the Lifeworld

The translatability of the lifeworld refers to its *meaning-donating* presence in our lives. Our immersion in life is, above all, an immersion *about* society. ‘[T]he lifeworld loses its prejudgmental power over

everyday communicative practice to the degree that actors owe their mutual understanding to *their own* interpretive performances.<sup>18</sup> Every horizon of meaning is personal in that its existence is due to every lifeworld member's meaning-donating contribution, and every horizon of meaning is social in that its existence is due to the fusion of various lifeworld members' meaning-donating contributions. Our orientation towards the other, towards society, and towards understanding enables us to orient ourselves towards ourselves, for we can only immerse ourselves in society insofar as society immerses itself in us. The linguistically structured lifeworld allows us to translate our horizon of experience (*Erfahrungshorizont*) into a horizon of meaning (*Sinnhorizont*). Communication is a coexistential exercise which forces us to translate our experience into language: language itself becomes an experience through which we collectively interpret—that is, speak about—the world. We all exist in, through, towards, and *about* our lifeworld.<sup>19</sup>

(v) The Totality of the Lifeworld

The totality of the lifeworld concerns its *holistic* presence in our lives. Our immersion in life is, above all, an immersion *for* society. The lifeworld means everything to us because we would be nothing without it. To be more precise, the lifeworld means everything to us because life would not mean anything to us without it. As a meaning-donating (*sinnstiftende*) source, the lifeworld gives meaning to our lives in at least three respects: first, it equips us with a horizon of meaning of a culturally pre-structured and historically transmitted *interpretive* background, which allows us to understand the world (*Weltdeutung*); second, it equips us with a socially pre-structured and cooperatively consolidated *integrative* background, which allows us to belong to the world (*Weltzugehörigkeit*); and, third, it equips us with a personally articulated and biographically developed *identitarian* background, which allows us to situate ourselves in the world (*Weltpersönlichkeit*). Disturbances in the reproduction of these three 'domains of culture, society, and personality'<sup>20</sup> result in the 'loss of meaning, anomie, and mental illness'<sup>21</sup> because we are ontologically dependent upon the meaning-donating function of the lifeworld. It is this tripartite ontological totality that transforms us into the most robust and, at the same time, most fragile entities: whilst the presence

of this totality enables us to raise ourselves out of nature, its absence forces us to fall behind it. We all exist in, through, towards, about, and *for* our lifeworld.<sup>22</sup>

(b) *The System*

The notion of the system refers to the institutionalised extension of the lifeworld reflecting every society's need for at least a minimum of functionally regulated structural differentiation. 'Systemic evolution is measured by the increase in a society's steering capacity'<sup>23</sup>. The irony of the system in the modern world consists in the fact that, whilst the very existence of the system depends on the existence of the lifeworld, the existence of the former undermines the existence of the latter. Whereas the lifeworld is based on the linguistic power of communicative rationality, the system is driven by the delinguistified power of functionalist rationality.<sup>24</sup> To the extent that the system is driven by functionalist rationality, its *raison d'être* is the permanent perpetuation of system rationality: the omnipenetration of modern society by functionalist rationality reflects the omnipresence of the system in every single sphere of social life, no matter how subtle it may be.

To comprehend the modernisation process of society in systems-theoretic terms implies a radical reconceptualisation of historical materialism. The predominant imperatives that drive this process are no longer monolithically defined in terms of *productive* forces, but more generally understood in terms of *systemic* forces. 'Marx conceives of capitalist society so strongly as a totality that he fails to recognize the *intrinsic* evolutionary *value* that media-steered subsystems possess. He does not see that the differentiation of the state apparatus and the economy *also* represents a higher level of system differentiation [...]. The significance of this level of integration goes beyond the institutionalization of a new class relationship.'<sup>25</sup>

In other words, in the modern world the system consists of two main dimensions: (i) the state and (ii) the economy. What unifies these two systemic spheres is that they are both driven by functionalist rationality; what separates them, however, is that they have diverging 'steering-media': (i) power and (ii) money.<sup>26</sup> Hence, the rationalisation process of modernity is primarily driven by two tendencies: the bureaucratisation and the monetarisation of society.<sup>27</sup> Inasmuch as *social* integration

takes place in the lifeworld, *functional* integration is realised through the system. Yet, these two modes of societal integration are fundamentally different: 'In contrast to social integration, which is directed toward the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld, functional integration is directed toward the material reproduction of society, which is conceived as the maintenance of the system. [...] System integration thus amounts to a non-normative regulation of individual decisions which extends *beyond* the agent's consciousness. Corresponding to the distinction between social (lifeworld) and functional (system) integration, we can distinguish between the rationalization of the lifeworld and the rationalization of the system.'<sup>28</sup> Ironically, the system appears to be a non-normative structural sphere of modern society; yet it imposes its own functionalist normativity upon society in general and the lifeworld in particular. The centrality of this apparently non-normative normativity is due to its normativising effect: the omnipenetration of society by functionalist rationality.

The Habermasian conception of the system contains five key aspects that determine the very nature of social systems and that illustrate the significance ascribed to the system within the Habermasian architecture of the social: (i) the transcendentality of the system, (ii) the intangibility of the system, (iii) the teleology of the system, (iv) the untranslatability of the system, and (v) the totality of the system.

(i) The Transcendentality of the System

The transcendentality of the system describes its *universal* presence in any kind of social formation regardless of its cultural and historical specificity. Although the degree of systemic complexity can vary substantially between different types of society, even the most primitive coexistential human life form contains a minimum of systemic—that is, structural—differentiation, which allows for the functional regulation of society. In essence, a social system is a combination of functionally regulated and regulating social structures. Social order is only possible as the functional ensemble of interconnected social structures.<sup>29</sup>

(ii) The Intangibility of the System

The intangibility of the system is due to its *mediated* presence in society. The function of a social system *is* mediation. It defines how social

relations are mediated, that is, *how* we relate to one another *through* social structures. Every time we experience life in the microcosm of the lifeworld, we are also, without necessarily being aware of it, situated in a social macrocosm, which is composed of the systemic structures of society. The tangible realm of the lifeworld is unavoidably embedded in the intangible realm of the system. Interpenetrating one another, they make each other possible. Yet, as ‘system mechanisms get further and further *detached* from the social structures through which social integration takes place’<sup>30</sup>, the rationality that originally drives social action, communicative rationality, is superseded by the rationality that gradually colonises social action, functionalist rationality. Losing touch with communicative rationality, we lose touch with ourselves. Insofar as systems are ‘delinguistified’<sup>31</sup>, their hegemonic omnipenetration of society undermines the normative power of human language. Thus, we are always potentially *bevormundet*<sup>32</sup> by the system; our lifeworld-based *Mündigkeit*<sup>33</sup>, which is motivated by the empowering force of communicative rationality, is jeopardised by system-based *Unmündigkeit*<sup>34</sup>, which is driven by the disempowering force of functionalist rationality. An intangible, transsubjective, systemic structure is incapable of speech and action and, therefore, unable to account for itself; a tangible, intersubjectively constituted, lifeworld-embedded actor, by contrast, *is* capable of speech and action and, therefore, able to account for himself. Relegating our communicative power to the system means liquidating it.<sup>35</sup>

(iii) The Teleology of the System

The teleology of the system manifests itself in its *self-regulative* presence in society. In other words, even though ‘systemic mechanisms need to be anchored in the lifeworld’<sup>36</sup>, they are at the same time always ‘self-maintaining’<sup>37</sup> and ‘norm-free’<sup>38</sup>. Insofar as systems obey their own logic of self-maintenance, they exist and function beyond the consciousness of actors—i.e. beyond their language—because systemic mechanisms are, as stated above, ‘delinguistified’<sup>39</sup> forms of action coordination. Inasmuch as communicative action is oriented towards reaching *mutual* understanding, systemic action is oriented towards reaching *self*-preservation. Inasmuch as the emancipatory potential of the social is built into the very structure of the communicatively oriented lifeworld, the repressive potential of the social is built into the very structure of the

functionally driven system. As long as social integration and system integration are still 'tightly interwoven'<sup>40</sup>, the non-normativity of the latter can be regulated and controlled by the normativity of the former; as soon as they come loose from one another, the normativity of the former is in danger of being absorbed by the non-normativity of the latter. The uncoupling of lifeworld and system is always an uncoupling of two diametrically opposed teleologies. The systemic teleology of functional self-maintenance is nothing but the self-reproducing autonomy of social structure.<sup>41</sup>

(iv) The Untranslatability of the System

The untranslatability of the system refers to its *meaning-confiscating* presence in society. Just as lifeworlds are driven by communicative rationality, systems are driven by functionalist rationality. 'In one case the action system is integrated through consensus, whether normatively guaranteed or communicatively achieved; in the other case it is integrated through the nonnormative steering of individual decisions not subjectively coordinated.'<sup>42</sup> The normative steering capacity of society is rooted in people's communicative power to determine their actions by virtue of their consensus-oriented rationality; the non-normative steering capacity of society stems from the system's functional power to determine people's actions by virtue of success-oriented rationality. In other words, to the extent that the understanding-oriented rationality of the lifeworld allows us to translate our horizon of experience (*Erfahrungshorizont*) into a communicatively shared horizon of meaning (*Sinnhorizont*), the success-oriented rationality of the system forces us to subordinate our horizon of experience (*Erfahrungshorizont*) to a functionally constituted horizon of steering (*Steuerungshorizont*). Systemic functionality is untranslatable into communicative normativity.<sup>43</sup>

(v) The Totality of the System

The totality of the system concerns its potentially *totalitarian* presence in society. The systemic quest for totality does not contradict, but complements its historically contingent character: the gradual uncoupling of lifeworld and system in modern society reinforces the systemic quest for totality. The less differentiated, the more lifeworld-centred society allows itself to be; the more differentiated, the more lifeworld-jeopardised soci-

ety forces itself to be. Whereas primitive society is the lifeworld-society par excellence, modern society is the system-society par excellence. 'The lifeworld concept of society finds its strongest empirical foothold in archaic societies, where structures of linguistically mediated, normatively guided interaction immediately constitute the supporting social structures. [...] A society of this type [...] is omnipresent; to put this another way: it reproduces itself as a *whole* in *every* single interaction.'<sup>44</sup> In other words, relatively undifferentiated societies are characterised by a quasi-congruent relationship between social integration and system integration, for 'the social system is largely merged into the sociocultural lifeworld at this stage of development'<sup>45</sup>. Hence, a low degree of structural differentiation allows for a high degree of communicatively based lifeworld-autonomy. By contrast, a high degree of structural differentiation allows for a high degree of functionally regulated system-hegemony. The systemically driven quest for totality constitutes the ground for the main structural conflict that is built into the Habermasian architecture of the social: the conflictual relation between lifeworld and system in modern society.<sup>46</sup>

(c) *The Lifeworld and the System*

The most crucial aspect of the Habermasian reconceptualisation of the social is not so much the isolated examination of either the lifeworld or the system, but the analysis of their *interrelation*. Hence, according to the Habermasian account, the main conflict in the modern world stems from the structural *tension* between the lifeworld and the system. This tension manifests itself in the *colonisation*<sup>47</sup> of the lifeworld by the system. The colonisation of the lifeworld is driven by the inner dynamics of the autonomous systems, the state and the economy.<sup>48</sup> Thus, 'systemic imperatives force their way into domains of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization'<sup>49</sup>. As a consequence, 'communicative action is replaced by media-steered interaction, [...] language, in its function of coordinating action, is replaced by media such as money and power'<sup>50</sup>, leading to 'a pathological de-formation of the communicative infrastructure of the lifeworld'<sup>51</sup>.

The irony of this colonisation process consists in the fact that it seems to lead to the *destruction* of society's original sphere of *construction*: the system, no matter how autonomous, is ultimately rooted in the



lifeworld. Colonising its cradle, functionalist rationality seeks to hegemonise communicative rationality. Rationality, arising from immediate human reciprocity, appears to lose its communicative core, when perverted into mediating systematicity. The communicatively constituted base of society, the lifeworld, becomes disempowered by its functionally regulated superstructure, the system.

This tension can be regarded as *ontological* in the sense that the lifeworld and the system are *per se*—i.e. due to their very nature—driven by two diametrically opposed types of rationality: communicative rationality, on the one hand, and functionalist rationality, on the other. This tension can also be relativised as *historical*, however, in the sense that the lifeworld and the system are *not* inherently—i.e. *a priori*—irreconcilable: ‘the disentangling of steering mechanisms from the life-world is not as such pathological, but intrinsic to modernization.’<sup>52</sup>

Thus, rather than demonising the systemic realm as such in ontological terms, its autonomisation needs to be problematised in historical terms. The autonomisation of the system *can* be pushed back by the re-autonomisation of the lifeworld.<sup>53</sup> The precondition for the establishment of an emancipated lifeworld in modern society is that communicative rationality becomes aware not only of its adversary, functionalist rationality, but also of *itself*. In order to regain the autonomy of the lifeworld, the steering mechanisms of systemic and norm-free functionality need to be challenged and controlled by the steering will of coordinative and discursive intelligibility. Put differently, the ‘unfinished project of modernity’<sup>54</sup> needs to face up to the ambivalence of its own existence between communicative and functionalist rationality.

In summary, lifeworld and system are related and divided due to their five most fundamental features. (i) Whereas the former is universally present because we need to be existentially immersed in the world, the latter is universally present because we need to be structurally organised in the world. (ii) Whereas the former promotes subjects’ *Mündigkeit* developed through the tangible experience of communicatively shared intersubjectivity, the latter promotes subjects’ *Unmündigkeit* imposed by the intangible force of systemically driven functionality. (iii) Whereas the former is driven by communicative rationality, and therefore oriented towards mutual understanding, the latter is driven by functionalist rationality, and therefore oriented towards self-preservation.

(iv) Whereas the former constitutes the nucleus of linguistic normativity, which allows subjects to translate their life experiences into communicatively shared horizons of meaning, the latter constitutes the centre of delinguistified efficiency, which forces subjects to subordinate their life experiences to success-oriented horizons of steering. (v) Whereas the quest for totality articulated by the former is guided by the need-based reality of *Gemeinschaft*, which allows us to understand, belong to, and situate ourselves within the world, the quest for totality inherent in the latter is steered by the function-based reality of *Gesellschaft*, which, in the modern context, compels us to administer and commodify the world. As subjects capable of speech we can comprehend this reality; as subjects capable of action we can change it.

## **ii) The Reconstruction of Critical Theory: Language and Communication**

The Habermasian paradigm shift from subject-centred to communicative reason is based on the prioritisation of language. This prioritisation is ontological in the sense that language is considered to be the cornerstone of human existence, and it is methodological in the sense that language obtains an elevated status for the analysis of the social. Thus, the Habermasian 'linguistic turn' converts language into the primary focus of its exploration of human coexistence. The communicative nature of language is regarded as both the ontological foundation of the social and the normative foundation of critique: the coordinative power of language allows us to coexist and the discursive power of language allows us to reason. Language is thereby conceived as the most revealing (*aufschlußreiche*) dimension of the social: its nature needs to be disclosed (*aufgeschlossen*) because some of the core characteristics of human coexistence are enclosed (*verschlossen*) behind the surface of linguistic communication. Hence, the understanding-oriented nature of the social can be uncovered by unveiling the understanding-oriented nature of language. Every society depends on linguistic communication because there is no action coordination without at least a minimal degree of mutual understanding. This view is most succinctly articulated in the formulation of Habermas's 'universal pragmatics':

The task of universal pragmatics is to identify and reconstruct universal conditions of possible understanding [*Verständigung*]. In other contexts one also speaks of ‘general presuppositions of communication,’ but I prefer to speak of general presuppositions of communicative action because I take the type of action aimed at reaching understanding to be fundamental. Thus I start from the assumption (without undertaking to demonstrate it here) that other forms of social action—for example, conflict, compromise, strategic action in general—are derivatives of action oriented to reaching understanding [*verständigungsorientiert*].<sup>55</sup>

The formulation of a universal pragmatics reflects the theoretical attempt to locate the normative foundations of critical theory in the rational foundations of language. Yet, the attempt to ground critical theory in the rational foundations of language should not simply be considered a theoretical exercise of an exclusively linguistic analysis. On the contrary, the far-reaching importance and ambitious nature of universal pragmatics stem from its claim to universality: assuming, as Habermas does, that the very possibility of human coexistence depends on the communicative foundations of society, the nature of the social cannot be adequately understood without understanding the nature of language. In order to explain the presuppositional underpinnings of this communication-theoretic view of the social, the subsequent analysis shall examine the following dimensions: (a) the notion of universal pragmatics, (b) the revealing nature of validity claims, (c) the link between validity claims and world-immersion, (d) the ‘communicative argument,’ and (e) the ‘ideal speech situation.’

*(a) The Notion of Universal Pragmatics*

The notion of universal pragmatics summarises the Habermasian idea that a communication-theoretic approach to the social aims ‘at reconstructing the universal validity basis of speech’<sup>56</sup> in order to locate the normative foundations of critical theory in the rational foundations of ordinary language. In other words, Habermas’s project is motivated by the ‘attempt to establish a normative foundation for critical theory through a reconstructive analysis of everyday speech’<sup>57</sup>.

Before elucidating Habermas’s programme of universal pragmatics in more detail, the significance of the notion ‘universal pragmatics’

should be taken into account. This notion points to a peculiar paradox: the intrinsic interrelationship between the universality of language referring to its context-transcending nature and the pragmatics of language referring to its context-embedded nature. In Habermas's words, a 'general theory of ordinary language would *combine* both points of view: the advantages of a formalized language on the theoretical level, and respect for natural language games on the level of the data.'<sup>58</sup> Such a complementary analysis allows the critical theorist to link the transcendental with the ordinary without falling into the trap of transcendentalism or empiricism: the transcendental *is* ordinary just as much as the ordinary *is* transcendental. Every language is based on a minimum of context-transcending formal rules, but it is spoken in the ordinary context of social life.

Given the ineluctable link between the universality of language referring to 'language as structure'<sup>59</sup> and the pragmatics of speech referring to 'speaking as process'<sup>60</sup>, Habermas's universal pragmatics emphasises the interdependence of our communicative competence and our communicative performances: communication is based on both language and speech. Whereas language, or *langue*, forms the universal framework that makes communication possible on the basis of a set of formal *rules* inherent in a particular language, speech, or *parole*, refers to the executive process that makes communication possible by *applying* the immanent rules of a particular language.<sup>61</sup> In other words, communication is the *combination* of language-based speech and speech-based language. Linguistic competence depends on linguistic performance as much as linguistic performance depends on linguistic competence. Competence and performance constitute two inseparable and equally indispensable elements of linguistically established intersubjectivity: our interactive competences are worth nothing without interaction, and our communicative competence is worth nothing without communication.

(b) *The Revealing Nature of Validity Claims*

Following Habermas, the pragmatic universality inherent in communication manifests itself in the fact that we unavoidably raise four validity claims (*Geltungsansprüche*) in every speech act:

[...] anyone acting communicatively must, in performing any speech action, raise universal validity claims and suppose that they can be vindicated [or redeemed: *einlösen*]. Insofar as he wants to participate in a process of reaching understanding, he cannot avoid raising the following—and indeed precisely the following—validity claims. He claims to be:

- a. Uttering something understandably;
- b. Giving [the hearer] *something* to understand;
- c. Making *himself* thereby understandable; and
- d. Coming to an understanding *with another person*.<sup>62</sup>

The transcendental nature of these four validity claims raised in every speech act is rooted in their existential significance: they encompass the entire philosophical complexity of the attempt to develop a comprehensive account of human coexistence in communication-theoretic terms. The four validity claims—(i) truth [*Wahrheit*], (ii) correctness or rightness [*Richtigkeit*], (iii) truthfulness or sincerity [*Wahrhaftigkeit*], and (iv) comprehensibility or intelligibility [*Verständlichkeit*]<sup>63</sup>—derive their universal transcendence from their powerful omnipresence in the social. The very existence of society depends on the communicative search for validity. Comprehensibility constitutes the most fundamental validity claim, for communication is ultimately oriented towards reaching understanding. Hence, our claims to truth, rightness, and sincerity must strive for comprehensibility in order to strive for validity.

The German term *Verständlichkeit* (comprehensibility) reveals the intimate connection between reason and communication: *Verstand* (reason) is derived from *Verständigung* (communication), which is ultimately oriented towards *Verständlichkeit* (comprehensibility). As a species striving for intelligibility, we have learned to reason by reasoning with and against one another. The reasonability of communication stems from its immanent search for intersubjectively articulated validity. Insofar as the very possibility of society depends on the power of linguistic intelligibility and insofar as linguistic intelligibility is permeated by its immanent search for validity, the existence of society cannot be dissociated from the existence of validity.

Human coexistence is never simply an ‘is’ but always also an ‘ought to be’. The intrinsic normativity of the social is reflected in the intrinsic

*criticisability* of validity claims.<sup>64</sup> Validity claims are unavoidably criticisable; to be more precise, they are socially criticisable. To assume that the validity claims raised in every speech act are criticisable means to acknowledge the criticisability of the social. The notion of *Sozialkritik* indicates the inseparability of the social and the critical moment of human existence. The social needs critique just as much as critique needs the social. As social beings, we are never simply caught up in the existential givenness of facticity, but we are always also immersed in the existential search for validity. The socio-ontological centrality of this immersion is reflected in the ten most important features of the Habermasian notion of validity claims.

(1) Insofar as validity claims are raised unavoidably, they are *world-transcending*. ‘World-transcending’, however, does not mean that validity claims are raised ‘outside’ the world; on the contrary, their world-transcending character implies that they are *necessarily* raised ‘within’ the world; they reflect our linguistic ‘transcendence from within’<sup>65</sup> the world. The transcending power of validity claims is nothing but our capacity to raise ourselves out of nature when producing linguistic utterances—and this we cannot avoid doing. In order to accept ‘the conditions of post-metaphysical thinking’<sup>66</sup> we need to acknowledge that ‘transcendental conditions are nothing more than *conditio sine qua non*’<sup>67</sup>. Any attempt to deny the fact that we necessarily raise validity claims when communicating will result in a ‘performative contradiction’<sup>68</sup>: the very denial of the unavoidability of our claims to validity is based on a claim to validity. To deny is to invoke validity. The universality of linguistically raised validity transcends the particularity of different languages: *all* human beings in *all* languages claim validity. Validity is claimed unavoidably.

(2) Insofar as validity claims are raised contextually, they are *world-embedded*. Since validity claims are always world-embedded, they are raised within the world. Hence, validity claims reflect our existential immersion in and linguistic engagement with the world. Only as situated beings are we capable of speaking and acting within the specific context of our lifeworld: we speak about the world and we act upon the world whilst being placed in the world. No linguistic validity can be claimed without a sense of existential locality. In order to replace

the metaphysical pretension of the 'philosophy of consciousness' by the postmetaphysical recognition of the 'sociology of consciousness' we need to acknowledge the unavoidable situatedness of human consciousness<sup>69</sup>: we raise validity in, through, towards, about, and for our lifeworlds because every claim for validity is a claim for existence, that is, a claim for existence *within* existence. Validity is claimed contextually.

(3) Insofar as validity claims are raised competently, they are *world-capable*, that is, they are both world-intuitive and world-reflexive. Communicative competence is a paradoxical affair: on the one hand, it enables us to raise validity claims intuitively and unreflectively; on the other hand, it enables us to raise validity claims discursively and reflectively. In the former case, the 'pretheoretical knowledge of competent speakers'<sup>70</sup> allows us to interact on the basis of taken-for-granted and non-problematised background assumptions; in the latter case, the 'potential for critique built into communicative action itself'<sup>71</sup> allows us to bring the taken-for-granted assumptions of the unreflexive background to the reflexive foreground. Therefore, our communicative competence is empowering in two respects: as an interactive competence, it makes linguistic interaction with our human fellows possible by raising and exchanging validity claims intuitively; as a reflexive competence, it permits us to problematise the validity claims raised and exchanged in linguistic interactions with our human fellows. Either way, validity is claimed competently.

(4) Insofar as validity claims are raised performatively, they are *world-pragmatic*. Validity claims are raised by communicative *actors* through communicative *action*. A pragmatist conception of the social does justice to the fact that the human world is a world composed of social practices. When performing a speech act we simultaneously perform an existential act: the act of existing in the world by speaking about, and thereby linguistically acting upon, it. Our linguistic *Weltverarbeitung* (world-comprehension) is a form of symbolic *Welthandeln* (world-action): we have come to comprehend the world by communicatively interacting within the world. The linguistic 'about' of validity stems from the practical 'within' and 'with-one-another' of humanity. There is no speech without speaking. It is no accident that, etymologically, the

word language derives from the Latin word tongue, for only by *using* our tongue have we learned to create the linguistic connection between cognition and action: as subjects capable of speech and action, we have learned to be cognitively active by being communicatively active. Validity is claimed performatively.

(5) Insofar as validity claims are raised referentially, they are *world-related*. Validity claims are always raised in relation to the world. Whether we relate to the natural, the social, or our subjective world, we cannot avoid relating to the world when raising validity claims by communicating.<sup>72</sup> The more explicit our relation to the world, the more reflexive our encounter with the world allows us to be; the more implicit our relation to the world, the more unreflexive our encounter with the world compels us to be. The power of reference derives from its power not to be referenced. The implicitness of our validity-based relation to the world describes the powerfulness of our linguistic immersion in the world. Whenever we speak we cannot avoid relating to the world. Validity is claimed referentially.

(6) Insofar as validity claims are raised simultaneously, they are *world-pluralistic*. In other words, 'communicative utterances are always embedded in various world relations at the same time'<sup>73</sup>. The distinctively human relation to the world is necessarily a '*threefold relation to the world*'<sup>74</sup>: through every understanding-oriented speech act, we always concurrently relate to the objective, the normative, and our subjective world. The 'level of complexity of speech acts that *simultaneously* express a propositional content, the offer of an interpersonal relationship, and intention of the speaker'<sup>75</sup> derives from the existential complexity of our immersion in the world: we are always simultaneously immersed in objectivity, normativity, and subjectivity. Even when only one of these three components is stressed or problematised in assertive ('I know'), normative ('I recommend'), or expressive ('I confess') speech acts, all of them are concomitantly present. Even when we bring only one of the three components of our existential background to our linguistic foreground, we implicitly take all three components of our existential background into our linguistic foreground. One-world explicitness cannot escape its three-world implicitness. In order for an



assertive statement to be true it needs to be normatively recognised and subjectively uttered to *become* true. In order for a normative statement to be appropriate, it needs to be assertively articulated and subjectively expressed to *become* appropriate. In order for a subjective statement to be sincere, it needs to be constatively stated and intersubjectively accepted to *become* sincere. Our existential condition compels us to accept the simultaneous presence of the constative, regulative, and expressive elements in our intelligible framework of reference: language. These constitutive linguistic elements owe their existence to the simultaneous presence of the objective, social, and subjective dimensions in our contextual framework of existence: life. No matter how implicit our immersion-based reference and reference-based immersion may be, validity is always based on all three worldly dimensions. Validity is claimed simultaneously.

(7) Insofar as validity claims are raised intelligibly, they are *world-comprehensive*. The three validity claims of truth, rightness, and truthfulness are all embedded in the fourth—and most fundamental—validity claim of intelligibility. A validity claim seeks and needs to be understood in order to allow for the very possibility of communication between at least two subjects capable of speech and action. As linguistically communicating entities, we have learned to understand the natural, the social, and our subjective world by understanding one another. The preponderance of the social is nothing but the preponderance of our socio-ontological orientation towards intelligibility. Validity is claimed intelligibly.

(8) Insofar as validity claims are raised intersubjectively, they are *world-recognitive*. The intersubjective nature of validity claims derives from their dependence upon the social world. More specifically, ‘validity claims’ are ‘recognition claims’: validity needs to be mutually recognised in order to count as valid. To acknowledge that language is, by definition, a social affair means to acknowledge that meaning is worth nothing without its recognition by meaning-reciprocating—i.e. meaning-sharing and meaning-fusing—subjects. ‘The identity of meanings, the foundation of every communication, is based on intersubjectively valid rules. Their validity is intersubjective, in the strict meaning of the word, if at least two speakers understand the meaning of a symbol on

the basis of reciprocal recognition. For only in that case is it possible for both speakers to comprehend and identify the meaning from their own position and from that of the other at the same time. Only this interlacing of perspectives makes an intersubjectively valid meaning, and thus identity of meaning, possible.<sup>76</sup> Habermas emphasises the recognitive nature of validity, thereby putting forward a thoroughly intersubjectivist notion of truth: truth is what we agree upon, for we have learned to understand the world by understanding one another. *Verstehen* is rooted in *Verständigung*. We do not only refer to the social world when raising a validity claim, but the social world always refers to us when accepting a validity claim. No matter how true, appropriate, or sincere a validity claim may be, its inherent force evaporates in an unnoticed cloud of nothingness if it fails to be recognised by another subject. Human cognition has emerged out of human recognition. The power of every validity claim to be recognised raises the ever-present danger of it being mis- or remaining unrecognised. The validity claimed by a subject needs to *become* valid by being recognised as valid by another subject. Validity is claimed intersubjectively.

(9) Insofar as validity claims are raised discursively, they are *world-rational*. Our ability to invoke validity on the basis of our linguistic utterances reflects our capacity to discuss validity claims with other subjects. Far from representing a professional privilege of social philosophers or scientists, our ability to discuss and problematise validity claims with other subjects constitutes a socio-ontological competence. This discursive competence is both an anthropologically inherent and an anthropologically achieved capacity: as an inherent capacity, all speaking and acting subjects are equipped with it; as an achieved capacity, the human species has developed it by developing itself through the intersubjective problematisation of the world. Thought would be nothing without discourse. We have learned to reason about the world by reasoning with and against one another. *Verstand* is rooted in *Verständigung*. Our communicative capacity to understand one another (*Verständigung*) anticipates our discursive capacity to reach an agreement with one another (*Einverständnis*). The power of communicative validity is always potentially subject to the power of rational discourse. Validity is claimed discursively.

(10) Insofar as validity claims are raised counterfactually, they are *world-utopian*. Emancipation is inherent in language since it is precisely through language that we have emancipated ourselves from our pre-linguistic dependence upon nature: to claim validity means to claim humanity, for no other entity in the world is capable of action *and* validity-based speech. Validity-based speech has allowed us to transform the *Mund* (mouth) of the animal into the *Mündigkeit* (responsibility) of the sapiens. It is from mouth to mouth that we have grown from *Mund* to *Mündigkeit*. By speaking with one another we have emancipated ourselves in a collective act of humanisation through communication. We humanise one another by communicating with one another. Our communicative capacity has replaced the limited eye-perspective of the animal by the horizon-creating mouth-perspective of the human being: as linguistic beings, we possess the capacity to project our own lives in terms of everybody else's life (*Hineinversetzungsfähigkeit*). Morality is nothing but validity-projecting intersubjectivity. Under communicative conditions 'everyone is required to take the perspective of everyone else, and thus project herself into the understandings of self and world of all others; from this interlocking of perspectives there emerges an ideally extended we-perspective'<sup>77</sup>. The communicatively created we-perspective constitutes a species-constitutive achievement (*Errungenschaft*). Our reflexive transcendence stems from our societal immanence: we go beyond ourselves as private individuals by recognising ourselves within others as social individuals. Every factual speech act is a counterfactual existential act: every time we communicate we cannot avoid realising an unrealised society, for speech equips us with the transperspectival perspective of reflexive community. Validity is claimed counterfactually.

(c) *The Link between Validity Claims and World-Immersion*

In order to appreciate the sociological importance of linguistically articulated validity claims, one has to explore the intimate link between validity claims and our practical immersion in the world. The distinctiveness of the human immersion in world-facticity (*Weltfaktizität*) is due to our linguistically articulated immersion in world-validity (*Weltgeltung*). Our immersion in validity stems from our immersion in linguistality. It is because the validity of human facticity is always discursively at stake that we are immersed in the facticity of human validity. Validity claims are

existence claims in the sense that their unavoidable presence reflects the distinctiveness of human existence: our relation to the world (*Weltbezug*) is permeated by our relation to language (*Sprachbezug*). The existential significance of language becomes clearer if we conceive validity claims in terms of the following dimensions: (1) domains of reality, (2) modes of attitude, (3) types of speech act, (4) themes, and (5) general functions.

The first validity claim is truth. (1) It refers to 'the' world of external nature. (2) It represents an objectivating attitude. (3) It is articulated through a constative speech act. (4) It enables the speaker to assert a propositional content ('speaking about'). And (5) it is used for the representation of facts.

The second validity claim is correctness. (1) It refers to 'our' world of society. (2) It represents a norm-conformative attitude. (3) It is articulated through a regulative speech act. (4) It enables the speaker to establish an interpersonal relation ('speaking to'). And (5) it is used for the establishment of legitimate social relations.

The third validity claim is sincerity. (1) It refers to 'my' world of internal nature. (2) It represents an expressive attitude. (3) It is articulated through a representative speech act. (4) It enables the speaker to expose his or her intentions ('speaking from'). And (5) it serves to disclose the speaker's subjectivity.

The fourth validity claim is comprehensibility. (1) It refers to language in general. (2) It represents an understanding-oriented attitude. (3) It is articulated through a communicative speech act. (4) It enables the speaker to establish intelligible relations with other speakers ('speaking with one another'). And (5) it allows for the very possibility of successful communication.<sup>78</sup>

Far from representing four different types of human world-immersion which are only linguistically relevant, the existential significance of validity claims manifests itself in the nature of ordinary human action: language and action are two inseparable elements of human existence.<sup>79</sup> Thus, in accordance with the identification of four main validity claims, we can distinguish four main types of human action.

(i) *Teleological action*, or purposive-rational action, is oriented towards success and aimed at the realisation of a particular goal.<sup>80</sup> There are two main forms of purposive-rational action. *Instrumental action* is

a non-social purposive-rational action in that it is aimed at the technical ‘intervention into a complex of circumstances and events’<sup>81</sup>. *Strategic action*, by contrast, is a social purposive-rational action in that it is aimed at ‘influencing the decisions of a rational opponent’<sup>82</sup>. In both cases, the actor seeks to maximise the utility of his or her action.<sup>83</sup>

(ii) *Normatively regulated action* is guided by social values, roles, and expectations. Thus, ‘members of a social group [...] orient their action to common values. [...] The central concept of *complying with a norm* means fulfilling a generalized expectation of behavior.’<sup>84</sup> Every time we interact we unavoidably generate normativity. Both the compliance with and the deviance from a norm are caught up in a horizon of normativity. Normativity is the epitome of validity: what is considered to be normal is considered to be valid. Yet, the unproblematised implicitness of normatively regulated action can be challenged by the problematising explicitness of communicative discourse.<sup>85</sup>

(iii) *Dramaturgical action* is motivated by the expressive self-presentation of the individual before other individuals. ‘The actor evokes in his public a certain image, an impression of himself, by more or less purposively disclosing his subjectivity. Each agent can monitor public access to the system of his own intentions, thoughts, attitudes, desires, feelings, and the like, to which only he has privileged access.’<sup>86</sup> We cannot escape our need to present ourselves in front of others as subjective beings. The ‘*presentation of self*’<sup>87</sup> is the precondition for the very possibility of interaction between different selves: there is no enclosure in the social world without at least a minimum of representational disclosure of our subjective worlds; intersubjectivity presupposes the involvement of subjectivity.<sup>88</sup>

(iv) *Communicative action* ‘refers to the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations (whether by verbal or extra-verbal means). The actors seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement.’<sup>89</sup> To the extent that comprehensibility represents the most fundamental type of validity claim because truth, rightness, and sincerity are in need of intelligibility in order to claim validity, communicative action is the most fundamental type of social action because our teleological, normative, and dramaturgical actions are in need of communicative reciprocity in

order to consolidate society. Put another way, the *constitution* of social order depends on the purposive, regulative, and expressive power of teleological, normative, and dramaturgical actions; the very *possibility* of social order depends on the coordinative power of communicative action. To regard communicative action as the most fundamental type of action means to recognise our socio-ontological dependence on the intersubjective coordination of our actions.<sup>90</sup>

Rather than regarding this conceptual differentiation of human action as a clear-cut ontological separation, it should be taken into account that these four fundamental types of human action interpenetrate one another to the extent that human action can possess various overlapping motivational driving forces at the same time. In order to define a specific human action on the basis of this four-dimensional typology, the question is which of these four types constitutes the predominant, rather than necessarily exclusive, motivational background of a specific human action in a particular, spatiotemporally defined, context.

Nonetheless, the analytical differentiation between these four types of action is fruitful in at least three respects. First, it confirms the praxis-sociological importance of the four validity claims in our everyday lives, reflecting the ineluctable link between rationality and human action (*empirical relevance*). Second, it puts forward a multidimensional, rather than a one-dimensional, conception of human action, insisting that sociological action theory must take into account the existential significance of these four types of action (*action-theoretic relevance*). Finally, it highlights the centrality of the Habermasian view that intelligibility can be regarded as the most fundamental validity claim just as communicative action can be regarded as the most fundamental form of human action, acknowledging that teleological, normative, and dramaturgical actions are only conceivable against the coordinative background of communicative action (*communication-theoretic relevance*). The importance of this last assumption shall be elucidated in the following section.

(d) *The 'Communicative Argument'*

The 'communicative argument' lies at the heart of the Habermasian conception of the social. Its pivotal importance is due to the fact that the understanding-oriented character of language in particular is interpreted as representing the consent-oriented character of the social in

general: language needs intelligibility, and society needs at least a minimum of coordinative stability. The intelligible nature of human communication reflects the coordinative nature of human coexistence: there is no social order without mutual understanding.

In order to make a case for such an understanding-prioritising view of the social, Habermas draws upon the central Austinian distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts: whereas the former are based on a 'communicative intent'<sup>91</sup>, the latter are 'oriented to success'<sup>92</sup>. '[I]llocutionary results are achieved at the level of interpersonal relations on which participants in communication come to an understanding with one another about something in the world'<sup>93</sup>. By contrast, '[p]erlocutionary effects, like the results of teleological actions generally, are intended under the description of states of affairs brought about through intervention in the world'<sup>94</sup>. The Austinian distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts epitomises the central Habermasian distinction between communicative and teleological action. Yet, it is not so much the distinction but the relation between the two which is of central importance to the Habermasian account of the social. In essence, the 'communicative argument' is based on the assumption 'that the use of language with an orientation to reaching understanding is the *original mode* of language use'<sup>95</sup>, upon which other, such as strategic and instrumental, uses of language are parasitic.<sup>96</sup>

To be more precise, the 'communicative argument' contains three closely interrelated presuppositions: (i) *communicative action*, defined as an action oriented towards reaching understanding, is supposed to represent the most fundamental type of action<sup>97</sup> (*communicative foundationalism*); (ii) *all* other forms of action—such as strategic action—are *derivatives* of action oriented towards reaching understanding<sup>98</sup> (*communicative holism*); and (iii) an *emancipatory* perspective of the human condition can ultimately be derived from 'reason as something that is in fact built into communicative relations, and that can in practice be seized upon'<sup>99</sup>: communicative rationality can serve as the normative ground for social critique (*communicative criticism*).

In short, communicative action represents the communicative foundation of a communicative whole that can be communicatively reflected upon. Communicative action is driven by communicative



rationality and embedded in the communicative competence of speakers. Translating the Marxian paradigm of production into the Habermasian paradigm of communication, the combination of the forces of communication (the competent speakers) and the relations of communication (the interacting speakers) constitutes a coexistential mode of communication (the community of speakers).

The centrality of the ‘communicative argument’ can hardly be overestimated: it suggests that a comprehensive critique of the social—*die Gesamtkritik der Gesellschaft*—is only possible if it can be grounded in communication, since, according to Habermas, communicative action represents the existential anchor of the social. In other words, the nature of the social can be revealed by scrutinising the nature of language.

(i) To the extent that language is ultimately oriented towards reaching understanding (*Verständigung*), society is founded upon a collective search for consensus (*Einverständnis*).

(ii) To the extent that constative, regulative, and expressive speech acts are ultimately only conceivable as communicative speech acts, teleological, normatively regulated, and dramaturgical actions presuppose the preponderance of communicative action.

(iii) To the extent that language is the ultimate ground upon which to formulate social critique, the communicative nature of human existence is the ultimate ground upon which to achieve social emancipation.

In a nutshell, to the extent that the telos inherent in human language is mutual understanding, the telos inherent in human existence is coexistence. The coexistential commonality (*Gemeinsamkeit*) of humanity is its sociability (*Gesellschaftlichkeit*). The communicative world-disclosure (*Welterschließung*) built into language is a form of societal disclosure (*Gesellschafterschließung*) built into human existence.

To acknowledge the foundational, holistic, and emancipatory status of communicative action means to account for the very possibility of social order. If ‘communication that is unintelligible breaks down’<sup>100</sup>, society that is uncoordinated breaks down: if social order were based on strategic action, it would, at least in the long term, unavoidably collapse. The relative stability of the human condition is due to the relative stability of human communication: our existential power to consolidate



social order is derived from our communicative power to coordinate our actions. This is not to deny the existence and significance of strategic action, but it means to recognise its dependence upon and derivation from communicative action. Communicative action is coexistential action.

(e) *The 'Ideal Speech Situation'*

The Habermasian notion of the ideal speech situation is intimately tied to the 'communicative argument', for it epitomises the understanding-oriented *Gesellschaftlichkeit*<sup>101</sup> which is built into the *Sprachlichkeit*<sup>102</sup> of human existence. The utopian moment of human existence is not simply a mental fantasy, but it is built into the very structure of language, since, following Habermas, 'in every discourse we are mutually required to presuppose an ideal speech situation'<sup>103</sup>. In the ideal speech situation 'communication is impeded neither by external contingent forces nor, more importantly, by constraints arising from the structure of communication itself. The ideal speech situation excludes systematic distortion of communication.'<sup>104</sup> To be more precise, the thesis that the ideal speech situation constitutes a necessary presupposition of communication is based on the following six key assumptions:

- (i) the understanding-oriented nature of communication allows us to come to an intersubjectively established *agreement*;
- (ii) we can distinguish between a *genuine* and a *deceptive* agreement;
- (iii) in order to guarantee that an agreement is genuine, we need to rely on the *unforced force of the better argument*;
- (iv) genuine agreement can only be claimed to exist as long as communication is *not* obstructed by *internal or external constraints*;
- (v) communication that is genuinely free from internal and external constraints presupposes the *symmetrical distribution of chances* to select and employ constative, regulative, expressive, and communicative speech acts; and
- (vi) only a situation in which this symmetrical distribution of chances is guaranteed can be called an *ideal speech situation*.<sup>105</sup>

In short, the ideal speech situation is an intersubjectively created communicative space that allows the speakers to reach an agreement

by virtue of the force of the better argument, without this communicative force being hindered by internal or external constraints, and with a symmetrical distribution of chances to choose and utter speech acts. On the whole, the concept of the ideal speech situation has five main macrotheoretical implications for Habermas's account of the social. First, it locates the emancipatory potential of the social in the subject's discursive capacity (*discursive power*). Second, it suggests that utopia is unavoidably anticipated in every communicative speech act (*anticipatory power*). Third, it detranscendentalises the notion of counterfactuality insofar as it attributes an emancipatory status to the necessary presuppositions inherent in ordinary language (*ordinary power*). Fourth, it conceives of the 'counterfactual conditions of the ideal speech situation [...] as necessary conditions of an emancipated form of life'<sup>106</sup> (*foundational power*). Fifth, it serves as a yardstick for the critical analysis of systematically distorted communication (*normative power*).

This last dimension is of central importance for Habermas's communication-theoretic critique of power, given that we can only recognise the factual distortion of language if we are able to identify the necessary conditions of its counterfactual non-distortion.

[...] communication can be systematically distorted only if the internal organization of speech is disrupted. This happens if the validity basis of linguistic communication is curtailed *surreptitiously*; that is, without leading to a break in communication or to the transition to openly declared and permissible strategic action. The validity basis of speech is curtailed surreptitiously if at least one of the three universal validity claims [...] is violated and communication nonetheless continues on the presumption of *communicative* (not strategic) action oriented toward reaching mutual understanding.<sup>107</sup>

Systematically distorted communication can be regarded as the antithesis of the ideal speech situation, for the former covertly violates the presuppositions of the latter. The power of linguistic validity is always also the power of discursive transparency: what is communicatively valid can be discursively questioned. The power of systematic distortedness is always also the power of deceptive secretiveness: what

is strategically distorted can be deceptively concealed. Whenever the endogenous validity of ordinary speech is surreptitiously encroached upon by the exogenous instrumentality of strategic force, the power of discourse is undermined by the power of deception. The more we are caught up in distortive deceptiveness, the more powerful is the secretive potential of strategic action; the more we engage in argumentative discursiveness, the more powerful is the emancipatory potential of communicative action.

Since the systematicity of distortive instrumentality is always parasitically dependent upon the ubiquity of communicative validity, the projection of the merely strategic community goes against the structure of language, whereas the 'projection of the unlimited communication community is backed up by the structure of language itself.'<sup>108</sup> Therefore, the concept of the ideal speech situation serves both as a detour and as a shortcut: as a detour, it idealises the structural conditions under which an emancipatory society *could* be realised; as a shortcut, it directly recognises that these conditions are *always already* existent in ordinary language. Reciprocal recognition articulated through language is the recognition of the other not only as a conversational interlocutor (*Gesprächspartner*), but also as an existential interlocutor (*Lebenspartner*). The ideal of an 'unlimited communication community'<sup>109</sup> (*Kommunikationsgemeinschaft*) is the ideal of an 'unlimited life community' (*Lebensgemeinschaft*). In the long term, human existence is only conceivable in terms of consensus-oriented coexistence.

### **iii) The Reconstruction of Hermeneutics: Society and Intersubjectivity**

The Habermasian reconstruction of hermeneutics aims at an intersubjectivist understanding of human existence. Within the framework of Habermasian critical theory, hermeneutics is understood not only as 'critical hermeneutics' but also as 'social hermeneutics', or, to be more precise, as 'socio-critical hermeneutics'<sup>110</sup>. According to this approach, the critique of the social stands unavoidably *within* the horizon of the social. Socio-theoretical transcendence is always already situated in socio-practical immanence. Nevertheless, even though we cannot

escape the always-alreadiness of the socio-historical horizon in which we are situated, we can at least reflect upon our situatedness in the world by virtue of our linguistically grounded reflectiveness. To be sure, our reflective ability to transform the 'world-in-itself' into a 'world-for-itself' does not absolve us from our unavoidable embeddedness in a socio-historical horizon, but it can make us aware of our situatedness in the social world, enabling us to move in and act upon the horizon in which we find ourselves immersed in accordance with our linguistically articulated reflections.

Hermeneutic philosophy does justice to the fact that human existence is a meaning-producing form of existence. Human beings have a deep-seated need to attach meaning to their existence. Therefore, the human *Dasein* is always also a form of *Darübersein*: the human 'being-there' is a 'being-about'. The peculiarity of humanity is due to our existential search for signifiability. Language enables us to articulate our search for meaning in an intelligible manner. An intersubjectivist view of human existence reminds us of the fact that our search for meaning is realised through the communicative creation of meaning. We search for meaning through the communicative effort of sharing it with one another. Ordinary language is embedded in ordinary social interactions. Hence, the human *Dasein* is to be conceived not only as a form of *Darübersein* but also as a form of *Miteinandersein*: the 'being-about' of the human 'being-there' is created through our 'being-with-each-other'. Our communicative production of meaning depends on our existential immersion in the social.

The social, in the Habermasian sense, can be defined as *the communicatively mediated outcome of intersubjectivity*. A communication-theoretic account of human existence takes the definition of the social conceived as the communicatively mediated outcome of intersubjectivity as its starting point. Thus, we cannot understand the human subject as an isolated subject 'in-itself', nor can we reduce it to a self-sufficient subject 'for-itself'. It is the linguistically mediated reciprocity *between* subjects which reveals that intersubjectivity can be regarded as the ontological cornerstone of human coexistence. The unavoidability of our embeddedness in intersubjectivity has at least five major implications for the constitution of the subject as a social self. Social selves are (a) contingent, (b) fluid, (c) multiple, (d) contradictory, and (e) knowledgeable.

*(a) The Contingency of the Social*

The contingency of the social is expressed in the contingency of the self. To exist as a fundamentally contingent self means to exist as a self that necessarily develops and changes in relation to divergent social, cultural, and historical *contexts*. The intersubjectivist model of the socially produced self is based on the ‘idea of recognizing-oneself-in-the-other’<sup>111</sup>: ‘the elementary form of self-relation is made possible by the interpretive accomplishment of another participant in the interaction.’<sup>112</sup> Even self-consciousness, through which the self can achieve relative cognitive autonomy, is dependent upon the consciousness of other human selves: ‘self-consciousness forms itself on the path from without to within, through the symbolically mediated relationship to a partner in interaction.’<sup>113</sup> All selves are necessarily social selves to the extent that they articulate themselves through their social environment. Inasmuch as society is possible only as an ensemble of intersubjectivised selves, the self is only possible as an ensemble of an intrasubjectivised society.

*(b) The Fluidity of the Social*

The fluidity of the social is expressed in the fluidity of the self. To exist as a fundamentally fluid self means to exist as a self that is necessarily *dynamic*, rather than static. Selves are in a constant mode of flux. Their constant motion goes hand in hand with the constant motion of society as a whole. Social selves and social relations ‘must be kept up through nothing less than a process of continuous creation’<sup>114</sup>, that is, through the ‘creative praxis’<sup>115</sup> of ‘acting and speaking’<sup>116</sup>. The processual nature of the social is rooted in the inherent need for the constant creation and recreation of dynamic selves. All selves are necessarily fluid selves to the extent that they are constantly changing over time. Inasmuch as society is possible only as a process of intersubjectivising selves, the self is only possible as a process of intersubjectivisation.

*(c) The Multiplicity of the Social*

The multiplicity of the social is expressed in the multiplicity of the self. To exist as a fundamentally multiple self means to exist as a self that is necessarily composed of the *plurality* of simultaneously existing selves.<sup>117</sup> Adopting a whole variety of different roles in society—the number increasing with the complexity of the society in question—the self finds

itself more and more fragmented. We are never only one-dimensional selves, but there is always a diversity of multiple selves within ourselves. The *Verselbständigung*<sup>118</sup> of the modern *Selbst*<sup>119</sup> is driven by its pluralised complexification. All selves necessarily consist of multiple selves to the extent that they are internally fragmented. Inasmuch as society is possible only as the plurality of multiple selves, the self is only possible as the pluralisation of selves both in relation to itself and in relation to other selves.

*(d) The Contradictoriness of the Social*

The contradictoriness of the social is expressed in the contradictoriness of the self. To exist as a fundamentally contradictory self means to exist as a self that is necessarily divided by mutually challenging and *conflicting* selves. What we are and how we are is not always consistent; it is inconsistent not only in relation to other selves, but even in relation to ourselves. Contradiction is not necessarily negative or 'self'-destructive. On the contrary, both our reflective and our practical abilities to deal with our inner contradictoriness reveal a distinctive feature of humanity: our capacity to recognise and cope with the problematic.<sup>120</sup> Contradiction is the motor of disarticulation *and* articulation, rupture *and* development. All selves are necessarily contradictory selves to the extent that they—as context-dependent, dynamic, and pluralised selves—can come into conflict with one another. Inasmuch as society is possible only as the conflict between selves, the self is only possible as the conflict with both itself and other selves.

*(e) The Knowledgeability of the Social*

The knowledgeability of the social is expressed in the knowledgeability of the self. To exist as a fundamentally knowledgeable self means to exist as a self that relies on both implicit and explicit, unproblematised and problematised, practical and theoretical, taken-for-granted and discursive, intuitive and reflexive knowledge. Our worldly knowledge of how to do things, our know-how, seems to give us a feeling of absolute certainty precisely when we do not make the implicit explicit, in terms of a know-that. Our unawareness of our intuitive awareness, the non-problematisation of our unproblematised knowledge, makes social interaction possible. Yet, 'the actor becomes conscious of his subjectivity

at the moment when his habitualized performance of an action is disturbed<sup>121</sup>. Analogously, the actor's habitualised performance of an action can become disturbed at the moment when he becomes conscious of his subjectivity, for the smooth functioning of our routinised actions depends on our largely intuitive, rather than conscious, immersion in the world. Disturbance can produce reflexivity just as reflexivity can produce disturbance.

To be sure, our linguistically constituted reflexivity raises us above any other form of being in the world. 'From the structure of language comes the explanation of why the human spirit is condemned to an odyssey—why it first finds its way to itself only on a detour via a complete externalization in other things and in other humans. Only at the greatest distance from itself does it become conscious of itself in its irreplaceable singularity as an individuated being (*Wesen*).'<sup>122</sup> Nevertheless, the reflective self-distancing of the self from itself and from other selves, our *sens théorique*, does not free us from our unreflective closeness to ourselves and to other selves, our *sens pratique*: 'you cannot get out of your own *sens pratique* just by recognizing that you have one.'<sup>123</sup> In other words, even the critical awareness of our practical ability to live our lives does not always give us the power to control this intuitive ability reflectively.

All selves are necessarily knowledgeable selves to the extent that their context-dependent, dynamic, variegated, and contradictory constitution can be produced and reproduced *both* intuitively and reflectively. Inasmuch as society is possible only as the simultaneously intuitive and reflective production of selves, the self is only possible as the simultaneously unconscious and conscious production of itself and other selves.

In short, the social is composed of contingent, fluid, multiple, contradictory, and knowledgeable selves. To regard the human *Dasein* as a *Miteinandersein* means to recognise its deeply intersubjective character. Human transcendence is always already embedded in social immanence: we have developed our reflective beyondness out of human togetherness. To derive the normative foundations of critique from the ontological foundations of the social means to locate human normativity in ordinary intersubjectivity. There is no self without other selves. We have no choice but to coexist.

## Notes

1. Habermas 1987 [1985]-d, p. 296.
2. See, for example: Habermas 1988 [1971], pp. 10–11; Habermas 1987 [1972], p. 377; Habermas 1987 [1981]-g; Habermas 1990 [1983]-a, p. 15; Habermas 2001 [1984]-b, pp. 26 and 36; Habermas 2001 [1984]-f, p. 110; Habermas 1987 [1985]-b, pp. 76 and 82; Habermas 1987 [1985]-d, pp. 295–297, 301–302, and 310–311; Habermas 1991 [1986], pp. 214 and 219; Habermas 1992 [1988]-a, pp. 3 and 7–8; Habermas 1992 [1988]-b, pp. 33–34; Habermas 1992 [1988]-d, p. 153; Habermas 1992, p. 245; Habermas 1994, p. 137; Habermas 2000b, p. 550; Habermas 2000c, pp. 324 and 331; Habermas 2001, pp. 30, 50, and 75.
3. In the secondary literature see, for example: Alexander 1991 [1985], pp. 53 and 59; Apel 1992, pp. 126 and 148; Bengoa Ruiz de Azúa 2002 [1992], p. 133; Bohman 1996, p. 197; Bolte 1989, pp. 7 and 14; Brunkhorst 1998, esp. pp. 69, 92–96, and 103–104; Cooke 1994, p. 145; Créau 1991, pp. 29–39, 81–91, and 140; Delanty 1997, p. 80; Dews 1999, pp. 112–113; Finke 2001, esp. pp. 171–172 and 189–194; Fultner 2001, pp. vii and x–xii; Giddens 1987a, p. 236; Giri 2004, p. 92; Heath 2001, pp. 286 and 296; Held 1980, pp. 331–332; Hohendahl 2001, p. 16; Honneth 1991 [1986]-a, esp. pp. 243 and 276–277; Honneth 1991 [1986]-b, esp. pp. 285 and 292; Honneth 1996, pp. 225 and 237; Honneth and Joas 1986, pp. 7–8; Hoy 1994, p. 152; Ingram 1994, pp. 225–226; Jay 1984, pp. 462, 467–468, 474, and 494; Joas 1991 [1986], p. 103; Krüger 1991 [1986], p. 143; Ladmiral 1998; Lafont 1999 [1993], pp. 125, 131, and 188–189; Landry 2000, p. 172; Lemieux 1992, pp. 29–31; Markus 1986, pp. 85–125; Matustik 1989, pp. 146 and 163; McCarthy 1981b, p. 421; Moritz 1992, esp. pp. 162–163, 167, and 193–197; Müller-Doohm 2000, p. 73; Münster 1998, pp. 11–37; Nault 2004, p. 257; Nielsen 2002, pp. 80–81; O'Neill 1985, p. 58; Outhwaite 1994, pp. 113 and 115; Papastephanou 1997, pp. 42–44 and 47; Papastephanou 2000, p. 51; Pleasants 1999, esp. pp. 154–155 and 172–173; Prieto Navarro 2003, pp. 17–21; Rademacher 1993, esp. pp. 12–14, 18–22, 73, and 103; Rasmussen 1996, pp. 34–36; Raulet 1996, pp. 69, 74, and 89; Ray 1993, pp. xiii and 38; Ray 2004, pp. 307–309; Reese-Schäfer 2001, pp. 10–14; Rockmore 1989, p. 104; Roderick 1986, pp. 151–157 and 167; Rorty 1994, pp. 985–986; Rorty 1997, p. 174; Schnädelbach 1990 [1982], pp. 270–271; Shalin 1992, pp. 237 and 244–253; Theunissen 1999, pp. 252–254; Thompson 1983, pp. 278–280; Tomberg 2003, pp. 269, 274, 293, 301, and 309; Trautsch 2004, pp. 182–183; Türcke 1989, p. 33; van den Berg 1980, p. 462; Weber 2005, p. 198; Wellmer 1977 [1976], esp. pp. 233, 247–248, and 251; White 1988, p. 27.
3. Habermas 1987 [1985]-d, p. 299 (italics removed from 'theoretically constituted perspective', 'products', and 'in general').
4. Habermas 1987 [1985]-e, p. 343.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. Insisting upon the tripartite—i.e. culture-based, society-based, and personality-based—ontology of the lifeworld, Habermas vehemently attacks the ontological reduction of the lifeworld to only one of these three components. According to Habermas, Schutz puts forward a one-sided 'culturalistic' (i.e. culture-focused), Durkheim a one-sided 'sociologistic' (i.e. society-focused), and Mead a one-sided 'social-psychologistic' (i.e. personality-focused) concept of the lifeworld. See Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, pp. 138–140.
8. Habermas 1987 [1985]-e, p. 342.
9. Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, p. 143.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 143–144 (italics added).
11. On 'the transcendentality of the lifeworld' see: Habermas 1987 [1965/1968], pp. 304–305 and 314–315; Habermas 1987 [1968]-e, p. 157; Habermas 1987 [1968]-g, pp. 192–193; Habermas 1987 [1981]-d, p. 108; Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, pp. 124–126, 129, 132, 135, and 143–144; Habermas 1985 [1984], pp. 165–166; Habermas 2001 [1984]-b, pp. 26–28 and 37–38; Habermas 1998, pp. 419, 422, and 452.



12. See Harrington 2000b, esp. pp. 729 and 732–733. See also Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, p. 123.
13. Harrington 2000b, p. 733.
14. *Ibid.*
15. On ‘the tangibility of the lifeworld’, see: Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, pp. 279, 293, 335, and 337; Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, pp. 124 and 128–129.
16. See Habermas 1984 [1976]-a, p. 1. See also Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, p. 293.
17. On ‘the teleology of the lifeworld’, see: Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, pp. 279, 293, 335, and 337; Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, pp. 119, 126–127, 130, and 143–144; Habermas 1985 [1984], pp. 160–161; Habermas 2001 [1984]-b, p. 37; Habermas 2001, pp. 16–17, 30, and 37.
18. Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, p. 133 (italics in original).
19. On ‘the translatability of the lifeworld’, see: Habermas 1987 [1965/1968], pp. 304–305; Habermas 1987 [1968]-b, p. 29; Habermas 1987 [1981]-d, pp. 102–141; Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, pp. 279, 293, 330, 335, and 337; Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, pp. 124 and 130–133; Habermas 1985 [1984], pp. 159–161 and 165; Habermas 2001 [1984]-b, pp. 25–26 and 29–44; Habermas 1999, p. 136; Habermas 2001, p. 23.
20. Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, p. 142.
21. *Ibid.*
22. On ‘the totality of the lifeworld’, see: Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, pp. 134, 135–148, and 152; Habermas 1985 [1984], pp. 167–168 and 173–174; Habermas 1987 [1985]-d, p. 299; Habermas 1987 [1985]-e, pp. 343–346.
23. Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, p. 152.
24. See Habermas 1987 [1981]-k, esp. pp. 153–155.
25. Habermas 1987 [1981]-o, p. 339 (italics in original).
26. See: Habermas 1987 [1981]-k, esp. pp. 154–160 and 165–167; Habermas 1985 [1984], p. 155. See also Giddens 1987b, p. 238.
27. See Habermas 1987 [1981]-n, esp. pp. 318–326.
28. Cooke 1994, p. 134 (italics added).
29. On ‘the transcendental of the system’, see: Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, pp. 151–152; Habermas 1987 [1981]-k; Habermas 1985 [1984], p. 151.
30. Habermas 1987 [1981]-k, p. 154 (italics added).
31. See *ibid.*, pp. 154 and 155.
32. Translation from German into English: ‘being treated like an immature’.
33. Translation from German into English: ‘responsibility’ or ‘accountability’.
34. Translation from German into English: ‘irresponsibility’ or ‘unaccountability’.
35. On ‘the intangibility of the system’, see: Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, pp. 151–152; Habermas 1987 [1981]-k, pp. 153–156.
36. Habermas 1987 [1981]-k, p. 154.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 154. See also Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, p. 150.
39. See Habermas 1987 [1981]-k, pp. 154 and 155 (already referred to above).
40. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
41. On ‘the teleology of the system’, see Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, pp. 150–152; Habermas 1987 [1981]-k, pp. 153–156 and 160; Habermas 1985 [1984], pp. 155–157.
42. Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, p. 150.
43. On ‘the untranslatability of the system’, see: *ibid.*, pp. 150–152; Habermas 1987 [1981]-k.
44. Habermas 1987 [1981]-k, pp. 156 and 157 (italics added).
45. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
46. On ‘the totality of the system’, see: Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, pp. 150–152; Habermas 1987 [1981]-k, esp. pp. 172–174 and 181–185; Habermas 1987 [1981]-m, esp. pp. 283–284; Habermas 1987 [1981]-n, pp. 303–305 and 318; Habermas 1987 [1981]-o, pp. 348–351.

47. On the Habermasian notion of the 'colonisation of the lifeworld', see, for example: Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, p. 332; Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, pp. 134, 140–143, and 148; Habermas 1987 [1981]-k, esp. p. 196; Habermas 1982, pp. 226 and 278–281.
48. Cf. Habermas 1987 [1981]-o, pp. 333–335.
49. Habermas 1987 [1981]-p, p. 374.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 374–375.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 375.
52. Giddens 1987b, p. 239.
53. Habermas interprets the rise of new social movements as an empirical manifestation of this possibility. They represent the communicative potential of the lifeworld, aiming to resist the functionalist imperatives of the system. See Habermas 1987 [1981]-p, pp. 395–396. See also Ray 1993, esp. pp. vii–xxi and 57–77.
54. See Habermas 1996 [1981].
- In his instructive essay 'Technical Progress and the Social Life-World', the early Habermas conceives of the ambivalent nature of modernity in terms of the challenging relation between technology and democracy: 'Our problem can then be stated as one of the relation of technology and democracy: how can the power of technical control be brought within the range of the consensus of acting and transacting citizens?' (p. 57). Whereas 'technological progress' is systemically steered by both the economy and the polity, 'democracy' is anchored in the consensual force of communicative action, which is always already present in the lifeworld. The challenge the human species needs to confront is to reconcile its interest in systemically steered technological progress with its interest in communicatively achieved human autonomy. See Habermas 1971 [1968]-a, esp. pp. 53, 56–57, and 61.
55. Habermas 1984 [1976]-a, p. 1.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
57. Thompson 1982, p. 116.
58. Habermas 1988 [1967/1970]-a, p. 139 (*italics added*).—This assertion is particularly interesting as it anticipates (in 1967) Habermas's explicit formulation of a 'universal pragmatics' (in 1971), which he developed, for example, in his Christian Gauss Lecture at Princeton University, delivered in 1971 and published in 1984 by Suhrkamp Verlag. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, 'IV. Vorlesung: Universalpragmatik—Überlegungen zu einer Theorie der kommunikativen Kompetenz', in Habermas 1984, pp. 83–104. English publication: Habermas 2001 [1984]-d.
59. Habermas 1984 [1976]-a, p. 6.
60. *Ibid.*
61. On the Saussurian distinction between *langue* and *parole*, and the Chomskyan distinction between 'competence' and 'performance', see, for example: *ibid.*, pp. 6–7 and 26–27; Habermas 2001 [1984]-d, pp. 68 and 71–73. See also, for example: Baert 1998a, pp. 17–19; Bourdieu 1992 [1977], p. 166; Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 51–58; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992e, pp. 141–142 and 146; Krämer 2002, esp. pp. 98–104; Krämer and König 2002; McCarthy 1982, pp. 60–61; Thompson 1992, pp. 4–5 and 7–8.
62. Habermas 1984 [1976]-a, p. 2 (*italics in original*).
63. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 2–3. I will stick to this order both in this section and in the following sections, i.e.: (i) truth [*Wahrheit*], (ii) correctness or rightness [*Richtigkeit*], (iii) truthfulness or sincerity [*Wahrhaftigkeit*], and (iv) comprehensibility or intelligibility [*Verständlichkeit*].
64. Habermas repeatedly emphasises the idea that validity claims are always and necessarily *criticisable*. See, for example: Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, pp. 287, 305, 308, and 333; Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, pp. 125–126, 137, 139, and 149–150; Habermas 1982, p. 269; Habermas 2001, pp. 33, 79, and 82–83.
65. See Habermas 1992. See also Trautsch 2004, pp. 182–183.
66. Habermas 1992, p. 227. See also Habermas 1992 [1988]-b.
67. Heath 2001, p. 283.

68. On the Habermasian notion of 'performative contradiction', see, for example: Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, p. 308; Habermas 2001, pp. 10–11 and 31; Abdel-Nour 2004, pp. 83–87 and 91–92; Apel 1990 [1985], pp. 43 and 45; Apel 1996, pp. 5–7; Bengoa Ruiz de Azúa 2002 [1992], p. 142; Ferrara 1987, p. 47; Gamwell 1997, pp. 25–27; Giri 2004, p. 93; Heath 2001, pp. 293, 296, and 309; Horowitz 1998, pp. 18–20; How 2003, pp. 44–45; Jay 1992; Johnson 1993, p. 76; Matustik 1989, esp. pp. 143–148, 169, and 172; Mitchell 2003, pp. 11–12; Nault 2004, pp. 266–267; Panagia 2004, pp. 825 and 829–833; Papastephanou 1997, pp. 41 and 59; Ray 2004, p. 317; Rorty 1994, p. 977; Schoolman 2005, pp. 336, 356–358, and 364; Swindal 2003, p. 146; Thomassen 2005, p. 550.

69. Habermas stresses the importance of his attempt to overcome the pitfalls that are, according to his intersubjectivist account of selfhood, inherent in the 'philosophy of consciousness' and the 'philosophy of the subject' (*Bewusstseins- und Subjektphilosophie*), which he accuses of putting forward a 'monological' and 'transcendental', rather than 'dialogical' and 'de-transcendentalised', notion of selfhood. See, for example: Habermas 1988 [1963]-a, p. 252; Habermas 1987 [1968]-b, pp. 27, 30, 31, and 35; Habermas 1987 [1968]-d, pp. 67–68; Habermas 1987 [1968]-e, pp. 154–155; Habermas 1987 [1968]-g, pp. 195 and 210–211; Habermas 1988 [1968], pp. 142–146 and 150–153; Habermas 1988 [1971], pp. 13–14 and 28; Habermas 1987 [1972], pp. 355–377; Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, pp. 279–280; Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, pp. 119, 124, 129, 130, 131, 135, and 149; Habermas 2001 [1984]-a, pp. 11, 16, 18, and 22; Habermas 2001 [1984]-b, pp. 23, 24, 26, 28, 34, 36, 43, and 44; Habermas 2001 [1984]-f, p. 127; Habermas 1987 [1985]-d, p. 296; Habermas 1999, pp. 129, 134, 142, 145, and 148; Habermas 2000a, p. 13; Habermas 2001, pp. 8–11, 15, 18, 20–24, 30, 44, 49, 51, 71–72, and 82–84; Habermas 2004, p. 889.

70. Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, p. 286.

71. Habermas 1987 [1981]-d, p. 121.

72. See Habermas 1987 [1981]-c.

73. Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, p. 120.

74. Habermas 1987 [1981]-c, p. 96 (italics in original).

75. *Ibid.* (italics added).

76. Habermas 1970b, pp. 369–370.

77. Habermas 1995, p. 117.

78. See, for example: Habermas 1984 [1976]-a, pp. 58 and 68; Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, p. 329. See also Thompson 1982, p. 123.

79. It should be noted that the transcendental significance of validity claims manifests itself not only in the typological differences between the main forms of human action, but also in the structural differentiation of three cultural value spheres in the modern era: 'with the development of science, morals, and art, stores of explicit knowledge were differentiated out' [Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, p. 335]. These three modern arenas of discourse stem from the most fundamental arenas of ordinary speech: the three cultural value spheres of science, morals, and art are rooted in the communicative search for truth, rightness, and truthfulness inherent in ordinary language. In other words, the differentiated sphere of cultural discourses, which permeate the modern *Lebensgesellschaft*, is derived from the linguistic force of validity claims, which are raised in the communicative interactions that take place in any human *Lebensgemeinschaft*. In a 'rationalised lifeworld' individuals are equipped with the postconventional capacity to differentiate and problematise the validity claims of (i) truth, (ii) rightness, and (iii) truthfulness, which are raised in their *Lebensgemeinschaft*, in accordance with society's institutional capacity to differentiate and consolidate the cultural discourses of (i) science and technology, (ii) law and morality, and (iii) art and art criticism, which permeate the modern *Lebensgesellschaft*.

On the interconnection between validity claims and cultural discourses, see, for example: Habermas 1988 [1971], pp. 25–27; Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, pp. 334–337; Heath 2001, p. 304; Raullet 1996, p. 91; White 1988, p. 33.

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80. See Habermas 1987 [1981]-c, pp. 85–88.
81. Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, p. 285. On Habermas's conception of instrumental action, see also, for example, Habermas 1971 [1968]-b, p. 92.
82. Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, p. 285. On Habermas's conception of strategic action, see also, for example, Habermas 1971 [1968]-b, p. 92.
83. The concept of teleological action is particularly prevalent in decision-theoretic and game-theoretic approaches in the social sciences. In this context, Habermas refers to both the founders of neo-classical economics and the theories of strategic games by von Neumann and Morgenstern. See Habermas 1987 [1981]-c, pp. 85–86.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 85 (italics in original).
85. The concept of normatively regulated action is particularly important in sociological role theory. Habermas regards Durkheim and Parsons as representatives of this approach. See *ibid.*, pp. 85–86.
86. Habermas 1987 [1981]-c, p. 86.
87. *Ibid.* (italics in original).
88. The concept of dramaturgical action is primarily put forward by phenomenologically oriented approaches to the social. According to Habermas, Goffman can be regarded as one of the most prominent advocates of this perspective. See *ibid.*, pp. 85–86.
89. Habermas 1987 [1981]-c
90. The concept of communicative action lies at the heart of Habermas's own approach to the social. Having said that, Habermas concedes that its theoretical centrality has been anticipated by Mead and the later Garfinkel. See *ibid.*, pp. 85–86.
91. Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, p. 290.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 293.
93. *Ibid.*
94. *Ibid.*
95. *Ibid.*, p. 288 (italics in original).
96. On the Habermasian elaboration upon the Austinian distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts, see, for example: *ibid.*, esp. pp. 288–295; Habermas 1985 [1984], pp. 157 and 169–171; Habermas 1998, p. 424. See also Austin 1962.
- On the 'communicative argument', see, for example: Habermas 1987 [1972], pp. 370–371; Habermas 1987 [1981]-c, p. 94; Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, pp. 274 and 278–298; Habermas 1985 [1984], pp. 151–178; Habermas 2001 [1984]-a, pp. 12–13; Habermas 2001 [1984]-e, pp. 85–86, 89, 92–93, 96, 99, and 102–103; Habermas 2001 [1984]-g, p. 159; Habermas 2001, pp. 17, 43, and 81–83; Steinhoff 2001, pp. 87–121.
97. See Habermas 1984 [1976]-a, p. 1.
98. See *ibid.*
99. Habermas 1987 [1985]-b, p. 82.
100. Habermas 2001 [1984]-e, p. 93.
101. Literal translation from German into English: 'sociability'.
102. Literal translation from German into English: 'linguisticity'.
103. Habermas 2001 [1984]-e, p. 97.
104. *Ibid.*
105. Cf. Thompson 1982, p. 128. It should be noted, however, that Habermas dissociates himself from the term 'ideal speech situation' in his later works in order to avoid an 'essentialist misunderstanding', as he calls it. According to this misunderstanding, the 'ideal' or 'transcendental' presuppositions of every speech act are located outside, rather than within, the world. Yet, Habermas makes it clear that the 'ideal' or 'transcendental' presuppositions inherent in ordinary speech are always world-embedded (*weltimmanent*). See Habermas 1996 [1992], p. 323: 'The counterfactual presuppositions assumed by participants in argumentation indeed open up a perspective allowing them to go beyond local practices of justification and to transcend the provinciality of their spatiotemporal contexts that are inescapable in

action and experience. This perspective thus enables them to do justice to the meaning of *context-transcending* validity claims. But with context-transcending validity claims, they are not themselves transported into the beyond of an ideal realm of noumenal beings. [...] This thought experiment [of the ideal communication community] [...] refers to concrete societies that are situated in space and time and already differentiated.' (Italics in original.)

On the Habermasian notion of the 'ideal speech situation', see also, for example: Habermas 1988 [1963]-b, pp. 279 and 281; Habermas 1970b, pp. 367 and 371–374; Habermas 1988 [1971], p. 17; Habermas 1987 [1981]-a, p. 42; Habermas 1990 [1983]-b, pp. 86–94; Habermas 2001 [1984]-e, pp. 85–86, 93, 97–99, and 102–103; Habermas 1987 [1985]-d, p. 323; Habermas 1993 [1990], pp. 163–165; Habermas 1993 [1991], pp. 54–57; Habermas 1996 [1992], pp. 322–323; Habermas 1992, pp. 419, 422, and 452; Habermas 1995, p. 117; Habermas 2001, pp. 7–8, 10–13, 23, 29, 37, 42, 45–47, 52, and 83–84; Habermas 2004, p. 875.

In the secondary literature see, for example: Apel 1990 [1985], esp. pp. 24–25, 33–35, and 42–51; Benhabib 1990, pp. 330–331 and 343–345; Bernstein 1995, pp. 47–57; Böhler 1990 [1982], esp. pp. 114, 132–133, and 136; Cooke 1993, p. 253; Cooke 1994, pp. 31, 172n.8, and 172–173n.9; Cooke 1997, pp. 9–13; Cooke 2004; Davey 1985, pp. 113–114 and 120; Factor and Turner 1977, pp. 194, 196, and 201–202; Ferrara 1987, pp. 44–45; Fultner 2001, pp. xv–xvi; Gamwell 1997, p. 37; Geuss 1981, pp. 65–75; Günther 1998, esp. pp. 235–236; Jay Kilby 2004, p. 308; Koczanowicz 1999, p. 57; Matustik 1989, pp. 159 and 166–167; McCarthy 1973, pp. 145–148; Mendelson 1979, pp. 71–73; Milley 2002, p. 58; Mitchell 2003, p. 7; Ray 2004, pp. 309 and 315–317; Trautsch 2004, p. 183.

106. Habermas 2001 [1984]-e, p. 99.

107. Habermas 2001 [1984]-g, pp. 154–155 (italics in original).

On the Habermasian concept of 'systematically distorted communication', see also, for example: Habermas 1970b, p. 374; Habermas 1988 [1971], pp. 16 and 24; Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, pp. 332–333; Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, pp. 134, 141–143, and 148; Habermas 2001 [1984]-e, p. 99; Habermas 2001 [1984]-g, pp. 129–170; Habermas 2000a, pp. 15–18.

108. Habermas 1992 [1988]-d, p. 188.

109. *Ibid.*, pp. 184 and 188. See also Cooke 1992, pp. 273–275.

110. In German: *sozialkritische Hermeneutik*.

111. Habermas 1992 [1988]-d, p. 175.

112. *Ibid.*

113. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

114. Bourdieu 1977 [1972], p. 189.

115. Habermas 1990 [1983]-a, p. 8.

116. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

117. Cf. Habermas 1985 [1984], p. 159.

118. Translation from German into English: 'autonomisation', or, literally, 'selfification'.

119. Translation from German into English: 'self'.

120. Cf. Habermas 2001 [1984]-e, p. 100.

121. Habermas 1992 [1988]-d, pp. 173–174.

122. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

123. Dreyfus and Rabinow 1999, p. 92.

## Chapter 4

### The Critique of Critical Theory

The Habermasian attempt to ground critical theory in language suffers from a number of substantial limitations. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to address all the numerous shortcomings of Habermas's communication-theoretic paradigm shift. Nevertheless, the present chapter examines some of the most important theoretical deficiencies that make the Habermasian language-focused reconceptualisation of the social not only an extremely ambitious, but also a questionable theoretical project.

#### ***i) The Deformation of Historical Materialism: The Simplification of the Social***

The communication-theoretic reconstruction of historical materialism can only claim to be a critical reformulation, rather than a total abandonment, of historical materialism if it is prepared to reconsider at least three interrelated problems that arise from a rather questionable interpretation of Marxian thought: (a) the problem of positivism, (b) the problem of economism, and (c) the problem of instrumentalism.

(a) *The Problem of Positivism*

Critical theory insists upon the inappropriateness of natural-scientific methods for the study of the social world, acknowledging that human beings are meaning-producing entities. The 'social world consists of speaking and acting subjects who constantly make sense of themselves and others, and whose meaningful and wilful activities cannot be comprehended by the methods of the natural sciences'.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the social world is not simply an objective but also a normative world. We cannot escape normativity because we cannot escape the social. Value-freeness *would* only be thinkable in terms of social-freeness, understood as complete independence from society<sup>2</sup>; but knowledge *is* only thinkable in terms of social-ladenness, understood as our inescapable dependence upon society<sup>3</sup>. The preponderance of the most fundamental validity claim, comprehensibility, reflects the unavoidability of the social: validity is a feature of a normatively regulated life form. Speaking and interacting, we unavoidably claim to be social. The intrinsic sociability of human existence destroys the positivist illusion of value-freeness. As members of the social world, we are never simply caught up in the imagined value-freeness of facticity, but we are always immersed in the factual value-ladenness of linguistically negotiated validity.

Therefore, Habermas is right to call into question Marx's 'demand for a natural science of man, with [...] positivist overtones'<sup>4</sup>, referring to Marx's assertion that '[n]atural science will eventually subsume the science of man just as the science of man will subsume natural science: there will be a *single* science.'<sup>5</sup> Since the social world is never simply an objective but always also a meaning-producing world, the methods applied to the study of the natural world are insufficient for the study of the social world. Consequently, the Marxian demand for the unification of the natural and social sciences is doomed to failure. The desired disciplinary universality of the scientific world fails to do justice to the meaning-permeated idiosyncrasy of the social world.

Nevertheless, it is equally important to recognise that Marx also emphasises the essentially practical nature of knowledge, insisting that *any* kind of knowledge—i.e. both ordinary and scientific knowledge—is socially embedded. In Marx's words: 'The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory

but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth, i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice. [...] All social life is essentially practical.<sup>6</sup> Marx's pragmatist emphasis on the 'this-sidedness' of human thought does not reproduce but undermines the positivist illusion of value-freeness because it acknowledges that any form of knowledge cannot be dissociated from the specific spatiotemporal context in which it has been produced.<sup>7</sup> To be sure, the Marxian attempt to transcend the disciplinary boundaries between the natural and social sciences coincides with the positivist programme of a universal and unified science. Yet, the Marxian emphasis on the essentially practical nature of knowledge contradicts the positivist illusion of a neutral and value-free science. According to both Habermas *and* Marx, there is no horizon of truth without a horizon of human praxis.

*(b) The Problem of Economism*

Economism is the view that all social phenomena are ultimately derived from economic forces and that, consequently, the former can be explained in terms of the latter. Historical materialism represents the systematic attempt to comprehend the constitution of society in terms of its material foundations. This does not mean, however, that it therefore ignores the symbolic dimensions of the social or that it necessarily reduces the symbolic to the material dimensions of the social. On the contrary, the Marxian analysis of language and consciousness may appear rudimentary and relatively undeveloped, if compared to Habermas's account; nevertheless the Marxian holistic approach to the social does regard the symbolic realm as a *constitutive* realm of human coexistence.

Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness [...]; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men. [...] Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all. [...] man's consciousness of the necessity of associating with the individuals around him is the beginning of the consciousness that he is living in society at all.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the social, in the Marxian sense, is constituted by labour *and* language. Language is not reduced to a mere epiphenomenon of



labour; it is the symbolically mediated expression of subjects' interdependence. We do not obtain consciousness simply from our cooperation (*Miteinanderarbeiten*), but, more fundamentally, from our coexistence (*Miteinandersein*).<sup>9</sup> This is not to deny the specifically materialist conception of language according to which linguistic meaning is necessarily embedded in the economic infrastructure of society: '[t]he production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life.'<sup>10</sup> In other words, language emerges within the materially conditioned horizon of social reality. Since society is constituted by structurally interdependent subjects, language 'arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men'<sup>11</sup>. Social immanence reflects the universality of human interdependence. Both from a Habermasian perspective *and* from a Marxian perspective, language is not reducible to a functional epiphenomenon of labour, in an economistic sense; it emerges because we depend on the ordinary experience of meaning-generating interaction, in a coexistential sense.<sup>12</sup>

(c) *The Problem of Instrumentalism*

Critical theory is the negation of instrumentalism. Motivated by substantive, rather than instrumental, rationality, the social is considered to be an end itself, rather than a mere means to achieve other ends, such as efficiency or profit. *Sozialkritik* is aimed at the critique of the social in favour of the social. Instrumentalism, by contrast, mutilates the social. The instrumentalised social 'is therefore not the satisfaction of a need but only a means to satisfy needs outside itself.'<sup>13</sup> The alienation of the social is driven by the objectification of subjects and the subjectivisation of objects: the more the object, the less the subject. Instrumentalism is the empowerment of the object based on the disempowerment of the subject.

According to the Habermasian critique of historical materialism, Marxian thought contains a problematic paradox: the simultaneous critique and reproduction of instrumentalism. The allegation that Marx puts forward an instrumentalist conception of human existence can be regarded as a core facet of the Habermasian reconstruction of historical materialism, for it is directly related to the debate about the nature of the social. Following Habermas, the problem of instrumentalism is intrinsic

to Marxian thought because the historical materialist approach tends to reduce the nature of the social to the constitution of labour, thereby degrading the most fundamental form of social action to purposive-rational action.

This instrumentalist reductionism, however, stems not from the Marxian conception of the social, but rather from the Habermasian misinterpretation of this conception. Marx does not propose, but, on the contrary, *criticises* the reduction of labour to instrumental action. The whole point of the Marxian analysis of alienated labour is to criticise the reduction of labour to an instrumental form of social action in class societies. Marx's four-dimensional analysis of alienation represents a comprehensive, multilayered conception of labour, rather than a reductionist, monologic one. According to this analysis, the exploited worker is alienated (i) from his product, (ii) from other producers, (iii) from the production process, and (iv) from himself as a species-being<sup>14</sup>:

- (i) *'The' product of external world*: 'The relationship of the worker to the product of his labour as an alien object that has power over him. This relationship is at the same time the relationship to the sensuous exterior world and to natural objects as to an alien and hostile world opposed to him.'<sup>15</sup> (alienation from the product)
- (ii) *'Other' producers of society*: '[...] the alienation of man from man. When man is opposed to himself, it is another man that is opposed to him. [...] Thus in the situation of alienated labour each man measures his relationship to other men by the relationship in which he finds himself placed as a worker.'<sup>16</sup> (alienation from other producers)
- (iii) *'My' production of internal nature*: 'He is at home when he is not working and when he works he is not at home. [...] The relationship of labour to the act of production inside labour. This relationship is the relationship of the worker to his own activity as something that is alien and does not belong to him [...], as an activity directed against himself, independent of him and not belonging to him.'<sup>17</sup> (alienation from the production process)
- (iv) *'Human' production of species-being*: '[...] labour is exterior to the worker, that is, it does not belong to his essence. [...] alienated labour [...] makes the species-being of man [...] into a being

that is alien to him [...]. It alienates from man [...] his human essence.<sup>18</sup> (alienation from species-being)

Hence, Marx 'does not simply treat labour as a monologic relationship between society and nature'<sup>19</sup>. On the contrary, the Marxian notion of labour represents a multifaceted relationship (i) between the producer and the natural world, (ii) between the producer and the social world, (iii) between the producer and the producer's subjective world, and (iv) between the producer and the producer's human essence. 'For the Marxian paradigm of production rests on the unity of processes of interaction between men and nature *and* between men and men.'<sup>20</sup> In other words, Marx conceives of labour not as an exclusively purposive but also as an intrinsically social activity. Labour constitutes a *socio-productive* anthropological invariant.

Interestingly, Marx's four-dimensional approach to labour has not been systematically compared with Habermas's four-dimensional approach to language.<sup>21</sup> Rather than emphasising the striking similarities between the two analyses, most critics tend to focus on the substantial differences between the two approaches, concentrating primarily on Habermas's reductionist reading of Marx.<sup>22</sup> Yet, both approaches *can* be compared in terms of the intrinsic nature that they ascribe to their most fundamental socio-ontological categories, that is, to language, in the case of Habermas, and to labour, in the case of Marx.

When we speak we unavoidably raise four validity claims (*Geltungsansprüche*): (i) truth, (ii) correctness, (iii) sincerity, and (iv) comprehensibility. In a Habermasian sense, these validity claims are inherent in language. They refer to our relationship with the objective world, the social world, our subjective world, and with language in general.

Analogously, we may argue that when we work we unavoidably raise four fulfilment claims (*Erfüllungsansprüche*): (i) purposiveness, (ii) cooperativeness, (iii) creativity, and (iv) createdness (*Erschaffenheit*). In a Marxian sense, these fulfilment claims are inherent in labour. They refer to our relationship with the objective world, the social world, our subjective world, and with labour in general.

Whereas language—or, to be more precise, communication—can be regarded as a socio-contemplative act oriented towards reaching under-

standing, labour—or, to be more precise, cooperation—can be conceived of as a socio-productive act oriented towards reaching createdness.<sup>23</sup> Rather than opposing the Habermasian paradigm of language and the Marxian paradigm of production to one another, it seems reasonable to stress the source of one substantial similarity between Habermasian and Marxian social theory: *both are based on a four-dimensional conceptualisation of their predominant paradigm*. Thus, even though they differ as to whether this paradigm should be conceived of as language or labour, they converge insofar as they conceptualise their paradigm in terms of the objectivity of the natural world, the normativity of the social world, the subjectivity of our internal world, and the totality of these three realms as represented in the essence of communication-theoretic *Verständlichkeit* and production-theoretic *Erschaffenheit*. The validity claims inherent in language and the fulfilment claims inherent in labour reaffirm the preponderance of the social. To the extent that communication is oriented towards understanding and cooperation towards createdness, *both* are ultimately oriented towards human interdependence. Human coexistence is claimed through both communicatively constituted *Verständlichkeit* and cooperatively constituted *Erschaffenheit*.

## **ii) The Deformation of Critical Theory: The Deradicalisation of the Social**

The Habermasian reformulation of critical theory is aimed at providing solid normative foundations for critique. The theoretical attempt to make the grounds of critique explicit constitutes a respectable and reasonable project insofar as it proposes a systematic theoretical framework that allows us to regard communicative action as the ontological foundation of the social and communicative rationality as the normative foundation of critique. Yet, despite the undeniable strengths of such an endeavour, the following problems need to be reconsidered: (a) the problem of linguisticity, (b) the problem of counterfactuality, and (c) the problem of normativity.

### *(a) The Problem of Linguisticity*

Critical theory is not the negation, but the problematisation of linguisticity. The centrality of language for both the ontology of the social

and the normativity of critique has not been ignored but emphasised by early critical, particularly Adornian, thought.

For to abolish language in thought is not to demythologize thought [...]; *it is in language alone that like knows like*. [...] Dialectics—literally: language as the organon of thought—would mean to attempt a critical rescue of the rhetorical element, a mutual approximation of thing and expression, to the point where the difference fades. Dialectics appropriates for the power of thought what historically seemed to be a flaw in thinking: its link with language, which nothing can wholly break.<sup>24</sup>

Linguisticity is the symbolically mediated expression of intersubjectivity, a socialised and socialising realm created by ‘like’ and ‘like’. Both Adornian and Habermasian critical theory defend the centrality of language as an intersubjective category in opposition to subject-centred philosophy.<sup>25</sup> The point is not to deny that Habermas’s communication-theoretic approach to the social is unprecedented in critical theory in elevating language, in an extremely differentiated and systematic fashion, to *the* most fundamental paradigm of the social<sup>26</sup>, but to acknowledge that language has been an important concern in critical theory before.

Nonetheless, although Habermasian and Adornian social theory share the view that critical theory needs to reflect upon the nature of language in order to understand the nature of critique, they differ in terms of their respective conceptions of the relationship between language and critique.

First, whereas Habermasian social theory stresses the emancipatory potential inherent in the communicative rationality of ordinary language (*langue*), Adornian social theory emphasises the emancipatory potential inherent in the expressive creativity of aesthetic language (*langage*).<sup>27</sup> This first discrepancy describes a tension between ‘critique through the rationality of *langue*’ and ‘critique through the art of *langage*’.

Second, whereas Habermasian social theory stresses the world-disclosing power of language, derived from its consensual search for validity, Adornian social theory emphasises the world-alienating character of language, derived from its identitarian confinement in

conceptuality.<sup>28</sup> This second discrepancy describes a tension between ‘critique as linguistic world-comprehension’ and ‘critique as linguistic world-delimitation’.

Third, whereas Habermasian social theory is language-affirmative, Adornian social theory is language-sceptical: according to the former, cognitive utopia would be to use arguments to understand and shape the world by virtue of undistorted and discursively tested validity claims; according to the latter, ‘cognitive utopia would be to use concepts to unseal the non-conceptual with concepts, without making it their equal.’<sup>29</sup> This third discrepancy describes a tension between ‘critique as discursive world-approximation’ and ‘critique as concept-sceptical world-distanciation’.

Despite these fundamental differences between the two accounts, they converge in that they both recognise the significance of language for critical theory: since rational critique is embedded in language, the former cannot be dissociated from the latter. Following Habermas, the critical subject’s dependence upon language constitutes a species-specific opportunity; following Adorno, the critical subject’s dependence upon language constitutes a species-specific contradiction.

The Adornian attempt to conceive of human emancipation in terms of expressive and artistic, rather than cognitive and linguistic, emancipation stands in contrast to the Habermasian communication-theoretic approach, which reduces expressive creativity and aesthetic experiences to the subjective realm of the third validity claim, authenticity or truthfulness.<sup>30</sup> From a Habermasian perspective, emancipation starts with the realisation and cultivation of the human subject’s discursive capacity. From an Adornian perspective, emancipation starts with the realisation and cultivation of the human subject’s expressive capacity. Artistic expression, in the Adornian sense, is liberating because of, rather than despite, its ability to transcend the realm of linguistic conceptuality. Whether or not one believes in the emancipatory power of art, Habermasian social theory is substantially flawed due to its lack of preoccupation with our non-linguistic, yet equally species-specific and emancipatory, capacities to raise ourselves out of nature. The power of *langue* cannot replace the power of *language*.

*(b) The Problem of Counterfactuality*

Critical theory is not the negation but the recognition of counterfactuality. From a Habermasian perspective, counterfactuality is factual in that utopia is always already anticipated by the emancipatory force of communicative action. The problem that we need to confront in Habermas's communication-theoretic approach to the social, however, is its possible 'abandonment of utopian-anticipatory moments of critique'<sup>31</sup> beyond linguistic communication. Habermas tends to reduce utopia to an ideal-typical conversational moment of speech. If 'concrete utopia is a "discourse free from domination"—hence, a conversational event'<sup>32</sup>—then it does not do justice to the holistic nature of the social.

Adorno's holistic notion of utopia is much richer than Habermas's communication-focused notion of utopia in relation to both (i) the notion of the subject and (ii) the notion of society. (i) Whereas Adorno regards the human subject in terms of both its rational *and* its non-rational capacities, Habermas tends to regard the human subject primarily as a rational entity, which raises itself above nature by virtue of rationally motivated speech acts. (ii) Whereas Adorno conceives of society as a social whole in Marxist terms<sup>33</sup>, Habermas tends to interpret society as a social whole in communication-theoretic terms. As a consequence, two different notions of utopia emerge on the basis of two diverging conceptions of the subject and society.

(i) Adorno aims at the emancipation of both the rational and the non-rational faculties of the human subject. Habermas, by contrast, puts forward a rationalistic notion of utopia, stressing the subject's linguistically constituted cognitive ability to unfold the liberating power inherent in communicative rationality. (ii) The Adornian conception of society embraces a Marxist notion of utopia according to which the main source of domination is class antagonism, leading to 'systematically distorted cooperation'. The Habermasian conception of society, on the other hand, formulates a communication-theoretic notion of utopia according to which the main source of domination is the systemic colonisation of the communicatively structured lifeworld, resulting in 'systematically distorted communication'.<sup>34</sup>

In short, if utopia is reduced to the liberation of human reason and human linguisticity, then we are confronted with an extremely

impoverished notion of the social. If utopia is conceived of as the emancipation of the entirety of the human subject and the entirety of society, beyond the merely rational and exclusively linguistic dimensions of human coexistence, then we embrace a much richer, holistic notion of the social. If *Gesellschaftskritik* is reduced to *Sprachkritik*, then critical theory is robbed of its critical thorn, *Sozialkritik*. The utopia of language cannot guarantee the utopia of the social.

(c) *The Problem of Normativity*

Critical theory is not the negation but the recognition of normativity. Normativity is acknowledged to be an unavoidable feature not only of critique in particular, but of human coexistence in general. *That* human coexistence is permeated by and based upon normativity is relatively uncontroversial; *what* this normativity exactly consists of, however, could hardly be more controversial. Any critical theory that claims to develop a sound account of human normativity needs to confront three fundamental questions.<sup>35</sup> (1) What are the ontological foundations of the social? The task of critical theory is to uncover the structural conditions that make social order possible. (2) What are the normative foundations of social critique? The task of critical theory is to provide grounds on which we can justify our agreement or disagreement with the constitution of existing social relations. (3) What are the main features of a comprehensive critical social theory? The task of critical theory is to elaborate a systematic theoretical framework that allows us to understand the relationship between the nature of social order and the nature of social critique.

The Habermasian response to these three fundamental questions is characterised by one central feature, which constitutes both its main strength and its main weakness: normativism. The Habermasian idea of normativity is based on three main assumptions. (1) Social order is continuously constructed and reconstructed through communicative interaction. The normativity of any social order owes its contingency to the coordinative power of communicatively interacting subjects. The variability of societal normativity manifests itself in the plurality of socially, culturally, and historically divergent lifeworlds. (2) Social critique is continuously articulated and rearticulated through communicative interaction. The normativity of any social critique owes its contingency to the



discursive power of communicatively interacting subjects. The variability of critical normativity manifests itself in the plurality of socially, culturally, and historically divergent forms of consensus. (3) Critical social theory needs to reflect upon the relationship between the normativity of social order and the normativity of social critique. Since Habermasian social theory considers our critical capacity to be built into our communicative competence, it is based on the assumption that the normative foundations of social critique can be derived from the communicative rationality that permeates ordinary social life. The Habermasian attempt to locate the normative foundations of critical theory in the communicative foundations of the social gives critique a solid foundation in that critique is considered to be a transcendental, communicational, and consensual force of ordinary social life, rather than an exclusive privilege of abstract philosophy. Yet, conceiving of normativity in (i) transcendental, (ii) communicational, and (iii) consensual terms is far from unproblematic for the following reasons.

(i) The problem with the Habermasian transcendental account of normativity is that it tends to underestimate the social factors that produce the normativity of human coexistence. It is insufficient to concede that '[l]anguage is *also* a medium of domination and social power'<sup>36</sup>, as Habermas's critical hermeneutic account of language does; it is also necessary to scrutinise the ways in which social structures of power and domination determine the very transcendental nature of language. The alleged transcendental telos of language varies contextually, depending on both the particular constitution of every socially situated subject and the structural relationships between differently situated subjects. Class, ethnicity, gender, age, and ability do not represent peripheral and anachronistic determinants of structuralist sociology, but they lie at the heart of the structural constitution of every communicative interaction. In other words, the structural sources of social asymmetry that exist between communicative actors do not only impinge upon the teleological nature of communicative interaction, but they can determine the very telos of communicative action itself. The interest-laden nature of normativity is rooted in the relational nature of the social.

As class-based, culture-based, gender-based, age-based, and ability-based acting subjects we are also class-driven, culture-driven, gender-driven, age-driven, and ability-driven acting subjects. Thus, the

very telos of our actions is largely driven by the *specific* interests that correspond to the positions, functions, and roles that we take on and incorporate in the social space. The transcendental interests of the self-constitutive and self-generative species are also the transcendental interests of a self-dividing and self-exploitative species. On the basis of our three quasi-transcendental knowledge-constitutive interests, we are able to control, comprehend, and critique the world in accordance with our *universal* position in the existential space. Yet, on the basis of our structurally determined social interests, we seek to control, comprehend, and critique the world in accordance with our *particular* positions in the social space. Our anthropological interests and aims differ in relation to our sociological interests and aims: as socially differentiated actors, we are divided actors with diverging social interests and aims. To do justice to our diverging positionality in the social space requires doing justice to the structural differentiability of our immersion in the social world. The transcendental status of understanding-oriented interaction goes hand in hand with the sociological status of interest-oriented interaction; there is no satisfying 'philosophy of human action' without a contextualising 'sociology of human action'. Understanding is embedded in human relationality. Therefore, to the extent that human relationality is characterised by structural differentiability, the very telos of understanding substantially varies between different subjects depending on their structurally determined situatedness in the social space. The transcendental normativity of the self-constitutive and self-generative species cannot substitute for the structural normativity of the self-dividing and self-exploitative species.

(ii) The problem with the Habermasian communicational account of normativity is that it tends to derive every social action from communicatively oriented action, for all other forms of social action—notably strategic action—are considered to be parasitic derivatives of communicative action. Even if we agree with the Habermasian premise that communicative action constitutes the origin of all other forms of social action, this insight does not allow us to understand the significance of strategic action in social life. Even if we agree with the Habermasian view that social order would, at least in the long term, necessarily collapse if it were based on strategic action alone, this insight does not allow us to understand the contribution of strategic action towards the

construction and maintenance of social order. The interested normativity of every social action can determine both the motivation behind and the realisation of a particular social action, no matter how unconscious its interest-laden nature may be. If the foundations of the social are, at least partly, permeated by strategic rationality, then human normativity needs to be regarded as the product of two contradictory but complementary types of social action: communicative *and* strategic action. The communicatively consolidated normativity of the intelligible species cannot substitute for the strategically shaped normativity of the purposive species.

(iii) The problem with the Habermasian consensual account of normativity is that it provides an extremely elastic standard for the normative foundations of critical theory. The Habermasian insight that we have learned to understand the world by understanding one another is based on one main epistemological strength and one main epistemological weakness. Its strength lies in the existential power it attributes to the intersubjective force of communication. Thus, we have learned to raise ourselves out of nature not only as tool-making, but also as tool-controlling, tool-comprehending, and tool-critiquing animals. Our communicative capacity constitutes a developmental capacity: as a species capable of intelligibility, we have learned to determine the evolution of society by virtue of the consent-oriented force of communicative action.

Yet, the weakness of such a consensual view of normativity lies precisely in the existential power it attributes to the intersubjective force of communication. If the validity of every truth claim ultimately depends on its intersubjective recognition reached through consensus, then we are confronted with a thoroughly relativistic account of truth. The hidden relativism that is inherent in the Habermasian consensus theory of truth is ironical given that Habermas is often accused of providing a transcendentalist account of truth and normativity.<sup>37</sup> If, however, the ultimate normative authority of truth is to be found in the intersubjectively recognised 'forceless force of the better argument'<sup>38</sup>, then the criteria of truth are surprisingly contingent. What may be *considered* to be true or appropriate in one society may be *considered* to be false or inappropriate in another society. Consensus is, by definition, historically and culturally contingent. To rely on consensus means to rely on contingency no matter how transcendental the validity claims through which we have

reached a specific consensus may be. The pragmatist dimension of the Habermasian consensus theory of truth appears to be so strong that we are confronted with the paradoxical proposal of a 'consensualist transcendentalism' according to which all societies reach a consensus about the truth *regardless of* their historical and cultural specificity, but according to which all societies also develop different forms of consensus about the truth *depending on* their historical and cultural specificity. To locate the ontological foundation of human normativity in the communicative force of consensus means to provide a foundation which not only allows for, but is also fraught with contingency. The consensual normativity of the discursive species cannot substitute for the universal normativity of a sound justificatory foundation for critical theory.

***iii) The Deformation of Social Theory: The Underestimation of the Social***

Habermasian social theory suffers from further shortcomings and has been criticised on many counts, including the following: its 'quasi-transcendental' nature<sup>39</sup>, its theoreticism and lack of empirical evidence<sup>40</sup>, its alleged inability to transcend the philosophy of consciousness and the philosophy of the subject<sup>41</sup>, its elitism and unpracticability<sup>42</sup>, its deradicalisation of critical theory<sup>43</sup>, its problematic theoretical eclecticism<sup>44</sup>, its rigid typology of knowledge-constitutive interests<sup>45</sup>, its tripartite world scheme<sup>46</sup>, its characterisation of the system as a non-normative sphere<sup>47</sup>, its questionable fusion of hermeneutics and functionalism epitomised in the notions of the lifeworld and the system<sup>48</sup>, its supposed gender-blindness<sup>49</sup>, its presumed ethnocentrism<sup>50</sup>, the problematic analogy it draws between psychoanalysis and critical theory<sup>51</sup>, and its reformulation of hermeneutics<sup>52</sup>.

The inherent deficiencies of the communication-theoretic approach reveal the complexity of any comprehensive theoretical framework that seeks to explicate its own normative foundations by identifying the ontological foundations of the social. No attempt shall be made to reflect the full complexity of the many criticisms of Habermas's project. Instead, the present chapter draws to a close with a critical analysis of the following key problems: (a) the problem of formalism, (b) the problem of rationalism, and (c) the problem of lifeworld-idealism.

(a) *The Problem of Formalism*

The Habermasian conception of language is in danger of creating a formalistic account of communication processes. This has two major implications: (i) the prioritisation of procedure, and (ii) the prioritisation of consensus.

(i) A proceduralist account of communication tends to give priority to the procedure of argumentation over the arguments themselves. Such a view is problematic in at least two respects. First, a proceduralist view of argumentation can at best offer a *formalistic notion of truth*. If more importance is given to the procedure of argumentation than to the arguments themselves, then we run the risk of criticising 'not arguments themselves but only the way in which they are conducted'<sup>53</sup>. If we comfortably interpret the structural presuppositions epitomised in the ideal speech situation as a procedural guarantee of the discursive identification of truth, then '[j]udgements cannot be criticized on the basis of the knowledge they embody; they can be criticized only on the basis of the way in which they are reached.'<sup>54</sup> Yet, even the hypothetical scenario of the ideal speech situation is at most a procedural precondition for, and not by any means a guarantee of, the discursive establishment of truth.

Second, a proceduralist view of the social can at best offer a *formalistic notion of utopia*. Striving for the ideal of consensus, the proceduralist notion of utopia embodied in the ideal speech situation tends to degrade the counterfactual social to the merely formal aspects of intact intersubjectivity. The identification of the *formal* conditions for the undistorted procedure of discursive will-formation does not tell us anything about the *substantive* features of a utopian society. Undistorted communication may indeed be an indispensable precondition for the consolidation of an emancipatory society, but the possibility of domination-free communication is only *one*, albeit fundamental, component of a domination-free society. Communicative rationality is not the only emancipatory potential that inhabits the within of the human beyond. A substantive, rather than formal, conception of utopia needs to explore the whole variety of emancipatory potentials inherent in the ordinary social. There is more to human happiness than undistorted communication.

(ii) A consensualist account of communication gives priority to agreement over disagreement. Yet, there are at least three main reasons

why an account which prioritises consent must prove to do justice to the universal significance of dissension as well. First, *dissension is a reality*. Disagreement, conflict, and partiality represent unavoidable parts of human coexistence. They exist as integral components of the social reaffirming its pluralistic contestability. We are and we want to be. What we are and how we want to be makes us inevitably biased and divergent. Both on a microsociological and on a macrosociological level, human divergence manifests itself in dissension and friction. The force of consensus coexists with the force of dissension.

Second, *dissension is a challenge*. Human beings are socially, culturally, and historically embedded entities; as such, they are divided by different *Lebensformen* and diverging *Weltanschauungen*. If there is one undeniable universal feature of humanity it is difference. The challenge to coexist despite the far-reaching impact of different *Lebensformen* and diverging *Weltanschauungen*, which separate different individuals and groups of individuals from one another, can only be confronted if we are prepared to accept the unavoidable force of dissension, rather than consensus. Discourse does not only invite us to reach a consensus, but it also invites us to accept and, more importantly, live with dissension. Reaching a consensus is just as challenging as accepting dissension.

Third, *dissension is a driving force*. The exclusive normative prioritisation of agreement, rather than disagreement, is not only unrealistic in a descriptive sense, but it is also undesirable in a prescriptive sense. Both consensus *and* dissension constitute evolutionary driving forces of a discursively equipped species. It is not only the consent-oriented, but also the consent-undermining force inherent in ordinary language which enables us to shape and constantly reshape the ever-changing horizon of human history. The more we disagree with one another, the greater the challenge to overcome this disagreement by virtue of the consent-oriented force of communicative discourse. The more we agree with one another, the greater the challenge to question this agreement by virtue of the consent-undermining force of communicative discourse. An emancipatory consensus is a consensus that is categorically distrustful of itself. Real strength believes in its own weakness. Every consensus needs dissension in order to avoid its degeneration into dogma. Emancipation needs disagreement. The power of communica-

tive discourse is its power to challenge the certainty of consensus by the uncertainty of dissension.

*(b) The Problem of Rationalism*

As already mentioned in the context of the debate on the nature of utopia in critical thought, Habermas's overly rationalistic conception of communication in particular and of the social in general is far from uncontroversial. If we regard communication as the reciprocal realm of speech acts that are *primarily* driven by communicative rationality, then we are confronted with 'an extremely impoverished notion of self and personhood'<sup>55</sup>. Yet, if we conceive of communication as the reciprocal realm of speech acts that are *partly* driven by communicative rationality, then we are able to do justice to the multilayered nature of communicative reciprocity involving non-rational—such as emotional, impulsive, or gestural—elements. This is not to deny the presupposition that communication is ultimately oriented towards understanding, since this universal orientation can be perfectly articulated in non-rational ways. Hence, the primary aim of communicative action may still be reaching an understanding. The ways in which we pursue this aim, however, are multifaceted involving both rational and non-rational elements.

The etymological meaning of the word 'con-sensus' reveals the importance of non-rational elements for communicative processes. 'The hyphen conveys its original meaning "feeling or sensing together," implying not agreement, necessarily, but a "crossing" of the barrier between ego and ego, bridging private and shared experience.'<sup>56</sup> Communicative intersubjectivity is not merely rational; on the contrary, the 'sensing together', expressed in the notion of 'con-sensus', forms an integral part of human reciprocity. The Spanish word *recordar*, 'to remind' or 'to remember', points in a similar direction: literally it means *volver a pasar por el corazón*, that is, 'passing through the heart again', not 'through the head'. Remembering, in communication-theoretic terms, is a deeply intersubjective process that can be linguistically mediated. It is no accident that, at least in Spanish, this remembering process can be characterised as something profoundly emotional and, at the same time, existential. Communication, understood as the symbolically mediated expression of human coexistence, is not merely driven by rationality; it is also driven by non-rational forces. The mean-

ing of the word 'sense' draws attention to the unreflective elements of communication: to assert 'it does not make sense' means literally 'we cannot *feel* it'. The English word 'sense' is derived from the Latin noun *sensus* ('feeling') and the Latin verb *sentire* ('to feel').<sup>57</sup> Thus, *recordemos el sentido del consenso*: let us remember the sense of consensus. Coexistence is co-sentiment.

The overly rationalistic conception of the subject inherent in Habermasian social theory is problematic in another, more far-reaching respect. Not only does it tend to overestimate the subject's capacity to contemplate and comprehend the world in rational terms, but, in addition, it tends to overestimate the subject's capacity to *live* and *act* in accordance with rational considerations and principles. The point is not to deny the distinctiveness of the human condition, which is largely due to our species-specific capacity to reflect upon our environment and upon ourselves by virtue of our communicatively grounded rationality. Insofar as rational capacity can be regarded as an evolutionary driving force of a self-constitutive and self-generative species, the anthropological significance of rationality can hardly be exaggerated. The point, however, is to question the importance rationality plays in Habermas's communication-theoretic model of the human subject in its everyday life. Put differently, it is not the anthropological but the sociological significance of rationality that is accorded an unrealistically powerful status in Habermasian social theory. Hence, Habermas overestimates the power of rationality in the real, rather than the scholastic, world in at least seven closely interrelated respects.

First, the Habermasian conception of social action underestimates the degree to which our actions are largely motivated by non-rational and unconscious forces, such as habits, customs, and conventions. Thus, most of our daily actions are guided not by critical reflexivity but by uncritical habituality. As habit-driven entities, we live in the world by *following* the world.

Second, the Habermasian conception of social action underestimates the degree to which our actions are largely motivated by practical and mundane, rather than theoretical and discursive, considerations. Thus, most of our daily actions are guided not by a reflexive 'know-that' but by an unreflexive 'know-how'. As praxis-driven entities, we live in the world by *coping* with the world.



Third, the Habermasian conception of social action underestimates the degree to which, even in the modern world, our actions are still embedded in ritual, rather than ‘postconventional’ contexts.<sup>58</sup> Thus, many of our daily actions are guided not by the intersubjective discourse of cerebral criticality but by the collective experience of ritual community. As community-driven entities, we live in the world by *ritualising* the world.

Fourth, the Habermasian conception of social action underestimates the degree to which our actions are largely motivated by corporeal and sensual, rather than rational and discursive, forces.<sup>59</sup> Thus, our daily actions are guided partly by deliberative reflexivity but also, to a large extent, by intuitive, instinctual, and sensual—i.e. visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile—corporeality. As corporeal entities, we live in the world by *sensing* the world.

Fifth, the Habermasian conception of social action underestimates the degree to which our actions are largely motivated by context-specific, rather than context-transcendent, forms of rationality. Thus, our daily actions are guided not only by the transcendental rationality that is rooted in the validity claims inherent in language, but also by the contextual rationality that is derived from the particularity claims inherent in the spatiotemporally determined situations in which we find ourselves immersed. As immersion-driven entities, we live in the world by *changing* worlds.

Sixth, the Habermasian conception of social action underestimates the degree to which our actions are largely motivated by structure-specific, rather than structure-transcendent, forms of rationality. Thus, our daily actions are guided not only by the universal rationality that stems from our knowledge-constitutive interests in controlling, comprehending, and critiquing the world, but also by the particular rationality that permeates our knowledge-divergent interests in reproducing, protecting, and cultivating the specific social structure to which we belong and with which we tend to comply. As structure-driven entities, we live in the world by *dividing* the world.

Finally, the Habermasian conception of social action underestimates the degree to which our actions are motivated not only by communicative but also by strategic rationality. Thus, a large part of our daily actions is guided not by the universal interest in mutual understanding

but by the particular interests in convenience, achievement, and power. As interest-driven entities, we live in the world by *taking advantage* of the world.

(c) *The Problem of Lifeworld-Idealism*

The problem of lifeworld-idealism is one of the most fundamental sources of criticism levelled against Habermasian social theory. Its centrality derives from three closely interrelated thematic dimensions: (i) socio-ontological optimism, (ii) socio-ontological utopianism, and (iii) socio-ontological romanticism.

(i) The Habermasian notion of the lifeworld is based on socio-ontological optimism. The problem this lifeworld-optimism raises is that it presupposes, rather than proves, the socio-ontological preponderance of communicative action. According to this presupposition, *all* forms of social action are derivatives of communicative action. In other words, even the most radical forms of strategic action—such as betrayal, conflict, fights, and wars—are parasitic forms of action derived from our quasi-transcendental orientation towards reaching understanding. Presumptively, communicative action is not only inevitable, but it is the ultimate source of human action; it is its origin.<sup>60</sup> Thus, ‘the fundamental norms of social action’<sup>61</sup> are presumed to originate from our search for mutual understanding.

The question remains, however, how it is possible to demonstrate, rather than to presuppose, ‘the parasitic dependence of the use of language “oriented toward success” on that “oriented toward coming to an understanding,” not only with respect to the *concealed* strategic use of language but also with respect to its *openly* strategic use’<sup>62</sup>. Whether it is possible to come closer to a sound justification of the ‘communicative argument’ through either a transcendental-pragmatic or a universal-pragmatic approach is an open question<sup>63</sup>, but in any case the argument has to be proven.

First, one could argue precisely the opposite, that is, that communicative action is a derivative of strategic action. Second, one could object that even speech acts oriented towards understanding are necessarily oriented towards success, for the communicative orientation that is supposed to be built into language is precisely a motivational *telos*.<sup>64</sup>

It would be no exaggeration to consider the ‘communicative argument’ as the Achilles heel of the Habermasian conception of the social. The problem is that the argument is just as strong as it is fragile, for it forms the *presupposed* foundation of the communication-theoretic account of the social.

Unless the ‘communicative argument’ can be proven, rather than presupposed, there is no reason to believe that instrumental action is primarily derived from the systemic forces of the state and the economy. On the contrary, it could be claimed that the functionalist rationality inherent in the system is only an extension of the strategic rationality inherent in the lifeworld. We would then have to face up to a very dark, but possibly more realistic, notion of the social. Within the dualistic architecture of the lifeworld—as the ‘base’ of the social—and the system—as the ‘superstructure’ of the social—the core problem of the social would then be the social itself, rather than its systemic articulation. The socio-ontological optimism that declares communicative action to be the ontological base of the social needs to be proven, rather than presupposed. Otherwise, its main strength is converted into its main weakness.

(ii) The Habermasian notion of the lifeworld is based on socio-ontological utopianism. Habermas’s utopian view of the social is epitomised in the ideal speech situation. Socio-ontological utopianism is directly related to socio-ontological optimism in that the former results from the latter. Assuming the validity of the ‘communicative argument’, hence, assuming that all forms of human action are ultimately derived from action oriented towards reaching understanding, the ideal speech situation represents a thought experiment that is real and unreal at the same time. It is real because its idealised conditions are supposed to be built into the very structure of language; hence, its particular strength derives from its universal presence. It is unreal because its idealised conditions clash with the concrete power-laden structure of society; hence, its universal presence can nevertheless be undermined by particular formations of society. In other words, utopia is and is not.

This structural tension between quasi-transcendental universality and empirical particularity transforms any notion of utopia into a contradictory project. If the inherent telos of communication is understanding and, consequently, a consensually coordinated form of coexistence,

the question arises *why* the immanent orientation towards understanding, which is built into the lifeworld, is perverted into an increasingly powerful orientation towards success, which is built into the system.

Drawing upon the dichotomous opposition between communicative and purposive rationality<sup>65</sup> in order to approach this question, there are three main possible scenarios: first, all forms of social action are ultimately derived from communicative action (*'optimistic derivative argument'*); second, all forms of social action are ultimately derived from strategic action (*'pessimistic derivative argument'*); or, third, all forms of social action are ultimately derived from both communicative and strategic action, that is, communicative action and strategic action are inseparably interrelated (*'realistic interpenetrative argument'*).

A utopian notion of the ideal speech situation that claims to be 'quasi-transcendental'—that is, at once universal and pragmatic—needs to face up to all three possibilities. The first scenario would convert utopia into a difficult, but necessary and completely justifiable project: speaking and acting, we *create* utopia. The second scenario would render utopia not only a difficult, but an impossible project: speaking and acting, we *annihilate* utopia. The third scenario would transform utopia into a difficult, but viable project: speaking and acting, we both *create and annihilate* utopia. Any critical notion of the social needs to be prepared to confront and explore all three possibilities. To the extent that the lifeworld is based on *one* of these three options, society as a whole, including its systemic spheres, is characterised by the nature of one of these three possible scenarios. The nature of the lifeworld—be it in the 'optimistic derivative', 'pessimistic derivative', or 'realistic interpenetrative' sense—reveals the nature of society insofar as the most differentiated complexity of the latter is necessarily rooted in the ordinary immediacy of the former.

The ambitious theoretical attempt to ground the normative foundations of critique in the ontological foundations of the social has to confront the possibly inherent contradictoriness of the social. If the profound ambivalence of the modern social is actually not rooted in the tension between the lifeworld and the system, but in the discrepancy between communicative and strategic action *within* the lifeworld, then the systemic manifestation of instrumental rationality is merely a symptomatic expression of the interpenetrative contradictoriness of the lifeworld itself.

In other words, the problem would be rooted in the ontological 'base' of society, in human action as such. *We* would be the problem.

The schizophrenic relationship between consent-oriented and success-oriented action would be indelible. The tension between the lifeworld and the system would be derived from *our* schizophrenia: the nature of intersubjectivity would be both communicative *and* instrumental, social *and* anti-social. Not only *Gesellschaft*, understood as the totality of externalised subjectivities on the level of both the lifeworld and the system, but also *Gemeinschaft*, understood as the totality of externalised subjectivities in the lifeworld, would be unavoidably schizophrenic. We would be socially unsocial, *gemeinschaftlich ungemeinschaftlich*. Any utopian notion of the social needs to confront the possibility of its own destruction. Critical utopia is critical of itself.<sup>66</sup>

(iii) The Habermasian notion of the lifeworld is based on socio-ontological romanticism. Habermas's romantic view society is intimately intertwined with an optimistic and utopian view of the lifeworld. Socio-ontological romanticism portrays the lifeworld as a powerfree realm of pristine intersubjectivity. Such a romantic notion relegates the source of power relations to the systemic sphere of the social, instead of locating them always already in the lifeworld. Power is interpreted as a lifeworld-exogenous and system-endogenous mechanism. Yet, such a romantic notion of the lifeworld 'fails to capture the processes of power that operate on a transsubjective level *within the historical-cultural lifeworld itself*'.<sup>67</sup>

Power does not invade the lifeworld only from without; it is not simply a *von außen Hineingetragenes*<sup>68</sup>. On the contrary, in order to grasp the interrelation of communicative and instrumental action one needs to explore the interpenetration of subjectivity and power. Subjectivity is the most hated ally and the most beloved enemy of power. There is no power without subjectivity and no subjectivity without power. Intersubjectivity is possible only through the reciprocal reproduction of power relations. The relational nature of power is inextricably linked to the relational nature of subjectivity: our power to be depends upon our power to be through the other. We are through the other. Our being is unavoidably social, a *Miteinandersein*. Our power to exist would be nothing without our power to coexist.

Communicative rationality stems from the ‘power to do’ something, that is, the power to perform an action oriented towards understanding. Instrumental and strategic rationality are based on the ‘power over’ something or somebody, that is, the power to perform an action oriented towards success over something or somebody. To the extent that *both* our consent-oriented and our success-oriented forms of action originate from the lifeworld, rather than from the system, the lifeworld constitutes a highly problematic, rather than an ‘unproblematic’<sup>69</sup>, space of intersubjectivity. Intersubjectively produced power relations may be perverted on a systemic level to such an extent that they gain immeasurable control over subjects and their lifeworld. Yet, the very notion of *perverted*—or *converted*—power relations reflects that power is an integral component of the lifeworld itself. It would be naïve to relegate the ontological basis of power exclusively to the systemic level.

The whole point of *socio-critical* hermeneutics is to explore the ways in which power and language, power and subjectivity, in short, power and the lifeworld interpenetrate one another *before* the power relations of the lifeworld are transformed by the power relations of the system, *before* instrumental and strategic rationality are converted into functionalist rationality. To be sure, the omnipresence of power does not necessarily indicate its omnipotence. Our reflective capacity to question the power of success-oriented action—be it its instrumental or strategic form in the lifeworld or its functionalist form on the systemic level—derives from the discursive power of communicative action, which is rooted in lifeworld.

The lifeworld is both our hope and our despair: as the ultimate source of communicative action, it represents the stronghold of the social; as the unavoidable source of purposive action, it also represents the thorn bush of the social. If we are to abandon a romantic notion of the lifeworld, we are obliged to accept the problematic nature of ordinary existence. The ordinary is just as problematic as the systemic. The immediacy of the lifeworld attributes a profoundly ordinary and tangible dimension to power; the mediacy of the system seems to ascribe a rather remote and intangible dimension to power. Critical theory needs to face up to both the systemic and the ordinary dimensions of power if it seeks to ground its critique in the foundations of social action. To reflect critically upon social action means to problematise us. We are the social.

## Notes

1. Thompson 1981, p. 1.
2. In German: *Unabhängigkeit von der Gesellschaft*.
3. In German: *Abhängigkeit von der Gesellschaft*.
4. Habermas 1987 [1968]-c, p. 46.
5. Marx and Engels, MEGA, I, 3, p. 123, quoted in: Habermas 1987 [1968]-c, p. 46 (italics in original). See German publication: Jürgen Habermas, 'Die Idee einer Erkenntnistheorie als Gesellschaftstheorie', in Habermas 1968, pp. 59–87, here p. 63: 'Die Naturwissenschaft wird später ebensowohl die Wissenschaft vom Menschen, wie die Wissenschaft von dem Menschen die Naturwissenschaft unter sich subsumieren: es wird *eine* Wissenschaft sein.' (Italics in original.)
6. Marx 2000/1977 [1845], pp. 171 and 173.
7. On the Marxian conception of the relationship between knowledge production (*Wissensproduktion*) and social being (*soziales Sein*), see Lenk 1986, esp. pp. 262–277. On the controversial relationship between Marxism and positivism, see *ibid.*, esp. pp. 168–184, 217–238, and 262–277.
8. Marx and Engels 2000/1977 [1846], p. 183.
9. Cf. Weber 1995. This article contains an excellent critique of the different ways in which Marxian thought—especially Marx's central model of base and superstructure—has been misinterpreted in terms of a merely productivist reading.
10. Marx and Engels 2000/1977 [1846], p. 180.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 183 (already quoted above).
12. Against an economistic reading of the Marxian conception of language, see LaCapra 1977, p. 254: 'In *The German Ideology*, it is interesting that language appears in the text before the discussion of ideology as distortion.' See also Landry 2000, p. 182. According to Lorraine Landry, Marx puts forward a *non*-reductionist conception of language: 'Theories of language in the pragmatic tradition conceive of language and speaking as embedded in social practices. While Marx arguably cannot be taken as an unproblematic precursor of this pragmatic tradition, his recognition of "language as practical consciousness," nevertheless, makes a methodological connection between understanding linguistic and ideological phenomena. Marx's frequent references to language in *The Grundrisse* and *Capital* provide examples of this methodological connection. In the former, for instance, Marx states that "ideas do not exist separately from language" and that both the development of production and the development of language require society.' [Landry quotes Marx from: Marx (1979) *Capital*, Volume 1, pp. 52 and 90.]
13. Marx 2000/1977 [1844], p. 88.
14. See *ibid.*—In order to compare Marx's analysis of labour with Habermas's analysis of language, I have deliberately changed the order of these four dimensions.
15. Marx 2000/1977 [1844], p. 89.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 88 and 89.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 88 and 91.
19. Callinicos 1989, p. 114.
20. Markus 1986, p. 92 (italics in original). Cf. *ibid.*: 'As a matter of fact, the Marxian characterization of the process of historical development (as the "universalization" and "emancipation" of man) relates *both* to human mastery over nature and to forms of social interaction; Marx's concept of "progress" includes the aspect of "driving back the limits of nature" as much as that of "formation of world-history" (the progressive widening of the sphere of social interactions) and the simultaneously proceeding, growing "individualization" of members of society.' (Italics in original.)

21. The systematic comparison between Marx's notion of labour (and what I shall call *Erfüllungsansprüche* or 'fulfilment claims') and Habermas's notion of language (and what he calls *Geltungsansprüche* or 'validity claims') constitutes the starting point of two projects undertaken here: (1) a constructive critique of both paradigms that stresses their similarities rather than their differences, and (2) the elaboration of an alternative, five-dimensional approach to the social.

22. See, for example, Roderick 1986, p. 157: '[...] a double reduction. First, Habermas conceives production, specifically labour, only in terms of the relation between human beings and nature. Secondly, he conceives labour only in terms of instrumental action whereby human beings attempt to master nature. The first is a reduction because production and labour involve both the relation of human beings to other human beings and the relation of human beings to their own inner nature, as well as their relation to outer nature. Marx's analysis of alienated labour makes clear that each of these dimensions are present in the labour process. The second is a reduction because human beings can, and do, adopt other relations to nature besides mastery and technological domination. [...] At the least, Habermas's criticism of Marx's paradigm of production seems to rest, as I have argued, on a one-sided scientific Marxist interpretation.'

See also Honneth 1991 [1986]-a, p. 241: 'Habermas introduces the activity of labour simply as instrumental action. He abstracts from all the expressive and personality-forming elements that the early Marx, along with Hegel and the romanticists, had also included within the concept of labor, and he posits only the perspective of purposive-rational control over natural processes: "By 'work' or *purposive-rational action* I understand either instrumental action or rational choice or their conjunction. Instrumental action is governed by *technical rules* based on empirical knowledge. In every case they imply conditional predictions about observable events, physical or social. These predictions can prove correct or incorrect." Of course, Habermas does not accept the emphatic characterization of labor as an expressive event.' (Italics in original.) [Honneth quotes Habermas from: Habermas 1971 [1968]-b, pp. 91–92.] See also *ibid.*: '[...] the positivistic reduction of human praxis to technical conduct.' See also *ibid.*, p. 243: 'In a turn stimulated by the encounter with hermeneutics, Habermas takes up normative and linguistic currents within sociological thought. In this way he is, from the beginning, on the watch for a reductionism that interprets society as a norm-free relation of instrumental or strategic action.'

Habermas's reply to the objections raised by his critics concerning his instrumentalist conception of labour seems rather evasive and unconvincing. See, for example, Habermas 1982, pp. 223 and 225–226: 'Agnes Heller renews an objection that has been raised from different sides against my separation of the concepts of labour and interaction. Stated briefly, this reservation is directed against the reduction of "labour" to "instrumental action"; the idea of labour, of productive activity, of practice—so the argument goes—is thereby robbed of its deeper dimension: the "anthropological significance" of labour is lost. Above all, what is lost is the normative content of creativity and self-realisation; and without the rationality inherent in the externalisation, objectification and appropriation of essential human powers, the concept of alienated labour must also lose its sting. [...] Agnes Heller seems to assume, as does Anthony Giddens, that dropping the philosophically dramatised concept of labour, which identifies labour with practice in the sense of creative self-realisation, means losing the possibility of preserving the critical meaning of alienated and abstract labour. But Marx himself immediately abandoned the anthropological model of labour as externalisation, which still furnished the standard for the critique of alienated labour in the "Paris Manuscripts", and shifted the burden of normative grounding to the labour theory of value. [...] I explain the alienation phenomena specific to modern societies by the fact that spheres of the communicatively structured life-world have increasingly been subjected to imperatives of adaptation to autonomous sub-systems [...]' See also *ibid.*, p. 267.



23. The importance of this analogy will become clearer in the tenth chapter of this book.
24. Adorno 1973 [1966], p. 56 (*italics added*).
25. Cf. Finke 2001, esp. pp. 191 and 193.
26. Cf. Honneth 1991 [1986]-a, p. 243: 'For the first time in the history of Marxism, communicative understanding is treated systematically as the paradigm of the social.'
27. See Adorno 1997 [1970], esp. pp. 18–37 and 225–261.
28. See *ibid.*, pp. 4–6, 10–13, 52–53, and 146–148.
29. Adorno 1973 [1966], p. 10.
30. Cf. Duvenage 2003, p. 97.
31. Benhabib 1986, p. 342.
32. Moritz 1992, p. 179 (my translation); original text in German: 'Konkrete Utopie ist der "herrschaftsfreie Diskurs"—also ein Gesprächsereignis.'
33. See Adorno 1973 [1966], pp. 10–11 and 183–186.
34. Cf. Rademacher 1993, esp. pp. 7–9 and 36–106. Cf. also Belmonte 2002, esp. pp. 32–35 and 44.
35. See introduction to this book.
36. Habermas 1988 [1967/1970]-c, p. 172 (*italics in original*) (already quoted above).
37. See, for example: Halton 1992; Koczanowicz 1999, esp. pp. 62–67; Rorty 1994; Rorty 1997; Rorty 2000a, esp. pp. 2–11 and 23–25; Rorty 2000b.
38. See Habermas 2001, pp. 13, 45, and 79. See also, for example: Apel 1990 [1985], pp. 35, 41–42, and 50; Ray 2004, pp. 317–318; Whitton 1992, p. 307.
39. See, for example: Bernstein 1976, p. 220; Detel 2000, pp. 177–178; Dodd 1999, pp. 125–126; Landry 2000, p. 172; Power 1998, p. 207; Power 2000; Ray 2004, pp. 315–318; Rorty 1994; Rorty 2000a, esp. pp. 2–11 and 23–25; Taylor 1999, esp. p. 162; Theunissen 1999, pp. 260–263.
40. See, for example: Apel 1992, p. 150; Baert 1998b, p. 147; Benhabib 1986, p. 331; Joas 1991 [1986], p. 117; Krüger 1991 [1986], p. 150; Leonard 1990, pp. 44 and 49; McCarthy 1982, pp. 61–62; Moritz 1992, p. 206; Steinhoff 2001, pp. 291–307; Thompson 1982, p. 127. Cf. Habermas 2000a, p. 18: 'Ich bedaure, daß ich meine "Überlegungen zur Kommunikationspathologie" nicht in empirischen Untersuchungen habe überprüfen können.'
41. See, for example: Benhabib 1986, pp. 330–331; Bohman 1986, p. 350; Dews 1999, pp. 87, 98, 110, and 113; Gardiner 2004, pp. 30–33; White 1988, pp. 46 and 131.
42. See, for example: Gardiner 2004, pp. 30–31; Geuss 1981, pp. 81–82; Gottlieb 1981, p. 289; Halton 1992, p. 352; Mouzelis 1992, p. 285; Pleasants 1999, pp. 172–173; Pusey 1987/1995, pp. 114–116; van den Berg 1980, pp. 475–476; Whitton 1992, p. 312.
43. See, for example: Antonio 1989, p. 735; Bohman 1986, p. 331; Créau 1991, p. 84; Moritz 1992, esp. pp. 195–198; Pleasants 1999, pp. 172–173; Power 1998, pp. 210–211; Whitebook 1979, pp. 44 and 66–68.
44. See, for example: Bernstein 1976, p. 220; Giddens 1982, p. 156; Jay 1984, pp. 468 and 483; Love 1995, p. 46; Power 1998, p. 207; Reese-Schäfer 2001, pp. 12–15.
45. See, for example (with regard to the early, rather than the late, Habermas): Baert 1998b, pp. 141–142; Delanty 1997, p. 92; Detel 2000, pp. 177–179; Giddens 1977b, pp. 150–151 and 163–164; Ingram 1987, p. 15; Ingram 1990, pp. 138–140; LaCapra 1977, p. 238; Thompson 1981, p. 97; White 1988, p. 27.
46. See, for example: Duvenage 2003, esp. pp. 97–100, 117–119, and 127–133; Feldman 2005, p. 316; Mouzelis 1992, p. 286; Niemi 2005, pp. 229 and 232–233.
47. See, for example: Honneth 1991 [1986]-b, pp. 298–299; Rademacher 1993, p. 15.
48. See, for example: Bolte 1989, pp. 10–13; Cooke 1994, p. 138; Habermas 1991 [1986], pp. 250–259; Honneth 1991 [1986]-a, p. 252; Joas 1991 [1986], esp. pp. 105–106 and 114–118; Kögler 1996, p. 21; Krüger 1991 [1986], pp. 147–153; May 1996, pp. 152–153; Moritz 1992, pp. 200–201; Outhwaite 1994, pp. 113–115; Schnädelbach 1986, pp. 28–29; Türcke 1989, pp. 24 and 33–34.
49. See, for example: Fraser 1991, esp. pp. 254–259 and 260–272; Johnson 2001, esp. pp. 55–59; May 1996, p. 155.

50. See, for example: Abdel-Nour 2004, pp. 83–84; Geuss 1981, pp. 66–67; Giri 2004, pp. 87, 93, 94, and 99; Heath 2001, pp. 282 and 302–303; Hoy 1994, pp. 157, 161, 203, and 205; Kurasawa 2003, esp. pp. 326–330 and 340–342; Lemieux 1992, pp. 78 and 82; Martin 2000; Maldonado-Torres 2004, p. 50; Ray 1993, pp. viii and xvii; Ray 2004, pp. 317–318; Rorty 1997, p. 176; Thompson 1983, p. 291; Warnke 1995.

51. The early Habermasian analogy between psychoanalysis and critical theory—or, to be more precise, between psychoanalysis and *Ideologiekritik*—seeks to demonstrate that both approaches aim at subjects' self-emancipation (*Selbstbefreiung*) through the uncovering forces of critical self-reflection (*Selbstreflexion*) and self-enlightenment (*Selbstaufklärung*). See, for example: Habermas 1987 [1968]-f, p. 189; Habermas 1987 [1968]-h; Habermas 1987 [1968]-i; Habermas 1987 [1968]-j; Habermas 1988 [1971], pp. 29–31. It should be noted, however, that the late Habermas distances himself from this problematic analogy. See Habermas 2000a, esp. pp. 13–15. For critical commentaries, see, for example: Baert 1998b, pp. 141–142; Geuss 1981, pp. 74–75 and 83; Giddens 1977b, p. 164; Jay 1984, p. 480; Moritz 1992, pp. 166–183.

52. See, for example: Davey 1985, p. 127; Harrington 2000a; Harrington 2000b; Harrington 2001, pp. 109–129; How 1985, esp. pp. 133–134 and 140–142; How 1995, pp. 213–224 and 225–228; Lafont 1999 [1993], pp. 137 and 222–225.

53. Cooke 1994, p. 161. Cf. Cooke 1993.

54. Cooke 1994, p. 161.

55. Baert 1998b, p. 148.

56. Love 1995, p. 62. Nancy S. Love quotes this sentence from: N. N. Holland, *Five Readers Reading*, quoted in Mary Kay Belenky et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), p. 223.

57. Cf. Pearsall 1998, p. 1693.

58. Cf., for example: Cheal 1992, esp. pp. 364–371; Hollis 1970 [1967].

59. On Habermas's 'rationalistic' conception of corporeality, see, for example: Habermas 1984 [1975].

60. In some of his writings Habermas explicitly says—and thereby implicitly admits—that his theory of communicative action is based on a *presupposition*. See Habermas 1972 [1969], p. 92: '[...] ich setze die *Hoffnung* [...] auf die Ethik der Rede. Ich gehe von der *Annahme* aus, daß die Fundamentalnormen des Handelns in der Form der Intersubjektivität möglicher umgangssprachlicher Verständigung begründet sind.' (Italics added.) [Quoted in Türcke 1989, p. 34.]

61. *Ibid.* (my translation); original text in German: 'Fundamentalnormen des Handelns'.

62. Apel 1992, p. 155 (italics in original).

63. Cf. *ibid.*—The opposition between the transcendental-pragmatic and the universal-pragmatic (or formal-pragmatic) approach stems from the polarised discussion between Apel and Habermas, who *share* the normative *goal* of showing that, ultimately, language is oriented towards reaching understanding, but who *differ* with regard to the question of which methodological *strategy* needs to be employed in order to demonstrate the understanding-oriented nature of language. See, for example: Apel 1990 [1985]; Habermas 1987 [1972], p. 354. In the secondary literature see, for example: Benhabib 1990, p. 339; Bouchindhomme 2002; Gamwell 1997; Papastephanou 1997; Raulet 1996, p. 78.

64. For an excellent explanation and detailed critique of this problem, see Steinhoff 2001, esp. pp. 18–25, 34–52, 87–121, and 269–286. See also, for example: Ingram 1994, pp. 242–243; Johnson 1991, esp. pp. 188–194; Moritz 1992, pp. 161 and 209; Roderick 1986, p. 159; Türcke 1989, p. 34; White 1988, pp. 30–31 and 46.

65. See, for example: Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, esp. pp. 286–295; Habermas 1985 [1984], esp. pp. 152–160, 169, and 173–175.

66. Cf. Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-a, p. 17: 'I too sometimes wonder if the completely transparent and disenchanting social universe that would be produced by a social science that was fully developed (and widely diffused, if that could ever be the case) would not be impossible to live

in. I think, all the same, that social relations would be much less unhappy if people at least understood the mechanisms that lead them to contribute to their own deprivation.’—Thus, critical self-reflection is not a guarantee of the consolidation of a utopian society, but it represents a crucial precondition for the possibility of its realisation.

67. Kögler 1996, p. 21 (*italics in original*). It should be taken into account, however, that Habermas, referring to this substantial point of criticism, acknowledges that the lifeworld is both exogenously *and* endogenously power-laden. See Habermas 1991 [1986], pp. 247, 254, and 258. On this controversial point, see also: Cooke 1994, pp. 20, 133, 171n.82, and 171n.83; Honneth 1991 [1986]-b, pp. 300–301; Outhwaite 1994, pp. 113 and 174n.9.

68. Translation from German into English: ‘imported from the outside’.

69. Cf. Habermas 1987 [1985]-d, p. 298. Cf. also Habermas 1991 [1986], p. 223.

## *Part II*

### **The Critique of Reflexive Sociology: 'Critical Sociology' or 'Sociology of Critique'?**



## Chapter 5

### The Concept of Reflexive Sociology

The Bourdieusian project of reflexive sociology represents a systematic attempt to understand the nature of the social by comprehending itself as part of the social. Far from pretending to formulate a scholastic, disinterested, and incontestable account of the social, reflexive sociology seeks to acknowledge and problematise its own practical, interested, and contestable immersion in social reality. Thus, the project of reflexivity is essentially a project of sociological self-questioning, recognising that our view of the world depends largely upon our place *within* the world. The effort to create a sociological account of its own existence is expressed in the reflexive-sociological preoccupation with the nature of knowledge.

#### ***i) Knowledge and Reflexivity: Normative Foundations***

Reflexivity constitutes the normative foundation of reflexive sociology in that it enables the subject to reflect upon both society and itself as an immanent part of society: reflecting upon itself, it reflects upon reflection, upon sociology itself. Hence, reflexive sociology is not only the study of the social in general, but also the study of sociology in

particular, i.e. the 'sociology of sociology'<sup>1</sup>. To be more precise, 'reflexive' sociology seeks to distinguish itself from 'mainstream' sociology in three main respects: reflexive sociology defines itself as (a) a project of science, (b) a project of vigilance, and (c) a project of distance.

*(a) Reflexive Sociology as a Project of Science*

Reflexive sociology considers the study of the social to be a scientific endeavour. In other words, sociology as such is conceived of as a science. Social science, in the Bourdieusian sense, can be defined as the systematic attempt to *uncover* the underlying mechanisms which causally determine both the constitution and the evolution of the social world. Reflexive social science comprehends itself as part of the social world. Thus, sociology is a science both about and through the social. Having said that, the explanatory power of sociology as a science derives from its reflexive capacity to step back from its inevitable immersion in society. Thus, 'the scientific ambition that the social sciences affirm by definition'<sup>2</sup> is not a denial of the simultaneous 'being about' and 'being within' the social, but, on the contrary, the systematic attempt to comprehend the complexity of this immersion. Reflexive sociology is the scientific effort to comprehend (*nachvollziehen*) the social by including itself (*einbeziehen*) within the social. The reflexive comprehension (*Nachvollzug*) of society is tantamount to the social scientist's deliberate self-inclusion (*Einbezug*) within society. The power of science is based on the fact that it enables the subject to reflect critically upon its immersion in the social. Rather than representing an intrinsic capacity of the subject, reflexivity is believed to be a capacity of science. In brief, the subject is enabled by the enabling power of science.<sup>3</sup>

*(b) Reflexive Sociology as a Project of Vigilance*

Reflexive sociology regards the study of the social as a critical activity that is accompanied by constant vigilance. To put it more radically, reflexive sociology *is* vigilance, insisting that the objectifying gaze of sociology needs to be objectified itself. In other words, the sociologist needs to sociologise herself, for the sociological analysis of the social world is structurally dependent upon the sociologist's position *in* the social world. Reflexive-sociological vigilance is an exercise of permanent self-objectification: a form of 'psychoanalysis of the scientific spirit'<sup>4</sup>

determined to examine 'the social conditions in which sociological works are produced'<sup>5</sup>. Since reflexivity is articulated within the social, it needs to dismantle its own situatedness in the social universe. The reflexive disposition of the sociologist reveals the scientist's privileged position in the social universe. Through self-critical vigilance, the sociologist's background can be brought to the foreground. Rather than representing a natural given, reflexivity constitutes a situated competence which needs to be escorted by permanent self-critical vigilance. In brief, the subject is enabled by the enabling power of vigilance.<sup>6</sup>

*(c) Reflexive Sociology as a Project of Distance*

Reflexive sociology conceives of the study of the social as a critical project that is not only carried out as a science and accompanied by vigilance, but also achieved through epistemological distance. Essentially, this epistemological distance, in the Bourdieusian sense, is attained by undertaking two epistemological ruptures: first, the break with the *ordinary* vision of the world; and, second, the break with the *scholastic* vision of the world.<sup>7</sup> The former reaffirms the scientific nature of reflexive sociology; the latter emphasises the social embeddedness of reflexive sociology. Hence, this double epistemological break is paradoxical in that it seeks to question the two very conditions of reflexive thought: the being-in-the-world and the being-beyond-the-world. The ordinary being-in-the-world constitutes the ontological basis of human life; ordinariness is inevitable (*Umgang ist unumgänglich*). The being-beyond-the-world represents the normative basis of human reflexivity; yet, beyondness is bypassable (*Übergänglichkeit ist übergebar*).

Reflexive sociology is the simultaneous attempt to circumvent unreflexive ordinariness and to avoid scholastic beyondness. In other words, reflexive sociology aspires not only to distance itself from too much closeness, but also to distance itself from too much distance. In order to comprehend the paradoxical nature of this endeavour, we need to examine the *relationship between ordinary knowledge and scientific knowledge* in more detail. The reflexive-sociological problematisation of this relationship is based on five epistemological presuppositions.

First, it is assumed that what is at stake here is the epistemological *distinction* between ordinary knowledge and scientific knowledge. It is asserted that the distinction between ordinary knowledge and scientific



knowledge stands not only for a conceptual, but also for an ontological difference. Ordinary knowledge is tangibly embedded in the normality of everyday life, which is governed by a rather practically oriented common sense. Scientific knowledge, by contrast, is implanted in the transnormality of critical reason, which is guided by a rather theoretically oriented reflexive sense. In short, ordinary knowledge and scientific knowledge must be distinguished from one another because they constitute two diametrically opposed forms of knowledge.

Second, it is assumed that not only a distinction has to be drawn between ordinary knowledge and scientific knowledge, but that this distinction describes a qualitative *hierarchy*. Scientific knowledge is superior to ordinary knowledge insofar as the former possesses the distinctive quality of freeing itself from the praxis-embedded illusions of the latter. In other words, the mediated reflexivity of the former is no longer caught up in the immediate spontaneity of the latter. The ordinary is literally to be superseded by the extra-ordinary, thereby achieving a reflexive distance from the mundane proximity of everyday life. The superiority of scientific knowledge is rooted in its capacity to question what is commonly taken for granted. In short, scientific knowledge is superior to ordinary knowledge, given that the former can promote distance-oriented reflexivity about the ordinary world, whereas the latter tends to endorse immersion-driven complicity with the ordinary world.

Third, it is assumed that, following this hierarchical distinction between ordinary knowledge and scientific knowledge, categorical *priority* has to be given to the latter. Thus, the task of scientific knowledge consists in freeing itself from the illusions of the common sense assumptions which permeate the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life. Ironically, the underlying mechanisms of the social are most remotely hidden from those who are most closely immersed in them. 'Being within' means 'being through'; 'being beyond' means 'being about'. The ordinary exists within and through the ordinary itself; scientific knowledge exists beyond and about the ordinary. The task of science is to translate the social *Einbezug* of the ordinary into a reflexive *Nachvollzug*. The science of the ordinary is the consciousness of the unconscious, the enlightenment about the unenlightened. In short, priority is to be given to scientific knowledge, as opposed to ordinary knowledge, insofar as

the former has the enlightening mission of uncovering the underlying mechanisms of the latter's existence.

Fourth, it is assumed that the distinction between ordinary knowledge and scientific knowledge reveals their diverging social *functionality*. Inasmuch as scientific knowledge epitomises the enlightening mission of uncovering the covered, ordinary knowledge embodies the vital function of consolidating social order. Not only does it allow for the reproduction of the social, but, more fundamentally, it makes the existence of social order possible in the first place. In other words, reflexive sociology does not seek to abolish the ordinary. On the contrary, to repeat this point emphatically: ordinariness is unavoidable. Reflexive sociology does assume, however, that it is precisely this ineluctable functionality of ordinary knowledge which does not allow us to rely upon it. Whereas the primary function of ordinary knowledge is to make social order possible, the central function of social-scientific knowledge is to allow us to question this very possibility. The essence of the ordinary is the unconscious of consciousness, the unenlightened of the 'to be enlightened'. Social life is only thinkable on the basis of the unthought. In short, ordinary knowledge is more fundamental than scientific knowledge because it constitutes the functional basis of social existence.

Fifth, it is assumed that the distinction between ordinary knowledge and scientific knowledge is based on the structural *asymmetry* between the ordinary actor and the social researcher. The epistemological distinction between the ordinary and the scientific is due to the positional gap between ordinary subjects, whose social actions are guided by common sense, and reflexive social scientists, whose task is to problematise the intersection of common sense and social action. In other words, the epistemological discrepancy between ordinary and scientific knowledge is rooted in a positional gap between unprivileged and privileged social actors. This presumably existing structural asymmetry has tremendous consequences for the theorisation of the social, since the social itself is portrayed as an unprivileged state of affairs, of unreflexive implicitness, whereas the science of the social is presented as a privileged state of affairs, of reflexive explicitness. In short, the epistemological difference between ordinary knowledge and scientific knowledge is epitomised in the positional gap between unprivileged social laypersons and privileged social researchers.<sup>8</sup>

**ii) Knowledge and Praxis: Normative Discourses**

To move from the philosophy of knowledge to the sociology of knowledge means to recognise that knowledge is always socially embedded. Even the most remote abstractness of scholarly thought cannot escape its structural dependence upon the tangible concreteness of social praxis. Reflexive sociology seeks to show that different forms of praxis produce different forms of knowledge; different *Lebensformen* produce different *Weltanschauungen*. Hence, epistemology needs to be understood as *social* epistemology if it seeks to go beyond mere theoreticist speculation. The Bourdieusian attempt to expose the intimate link between knowledge and praxis is instantiated in the notion of *doxa*:

In a determinate social formation, the stabler the objective structures and the more fully they reproduce themselves in the agents' dispositions, the greater the extent of the field of doxa, of that which is taken for granted. [...] Because the subjective necessity and self-evidence of the commonsense world are validated by the objective consensus on the sense of the world, what is essential *goes without saying because it comes without saying*: the tradition is silent, not least about itself as a tradition [...]. The adherence expressed in the doxic relation to the social world is the absolute form of recognition of legitimacy through misrecognition of arbitrariness [...].<sup>9</sup>

In essence, doxa is the taken-for-grantedness of social existence based on common sense. The preponderance of doxa is derived from the preponderance of the social itself. This is what makes doxa so powerful, and this is what makes ordinary actors so powerless. Since we are necessarily caught up in the ordinary praxis of everyday life, we are inevitably absorbed by the doxic character of the social. The imposition of the ontology of the social is reflected in the imposition of the normativity of doxa. This is why praxis and knowledge are intimately intertwined. Ordinary praxis produces ordinary knowledge; ordinary life produces doxa. Yet, we still need to be more precise about the exact sources of the preponderance of doxa. The power of doxa is rooted in (a) its ubiquity, (b) its familiarity, (c) its malleability, (d) its unrecognisability, and (e) its legitimacy.

(a) *The Ubiquity of Doxa*

The ubiquity of doxa is due to the ubiquity of the ordinary social. Any social order—regardless of its historical and cultural specificity—is based on ordinary existence. Even the economically most advanced, culturally most complex, and systemically most differentiated form of social order cannot be divorced from the reproduction of ordinary existence. If the reproduction of ordinary life is fundamental to any form of social order and if ordinary praxis produces ordinary knowledge, then the production and the reproduction of doxa are equally fundamental to the constitution of the social. The omnipresence of doxa reveals that human interdependence is born in the lap of ordinary coexistence. The most authentic form of human interrelationality is ordinary intersubjectivity. It is the nucleus of social interaction. Common sense is born in the nucleus of the ordinary, where meaning is shared for the first time. ‘Common sense is a stock of self-evidences shared by all, which, within the limits of a social universe, ensures a primordial consensus on the meaning of the world, a set of tacitly accepted commonplaces which make confrontation, dialogue, competition and even conflict possible, and among which a special place must be reserved for the principles of classification, such as the major oppositions structuring the perception of the world.’<sup>10</sup> It is the inclusive and consensual character of doxa which forms the basis of its ubiquity. Social order would be impossible without a minimum of commonplaces tacitly accepted by its members. Doxa is everywhere because ordinary social praxis is everywhere.

(b) *The Familiarity of Doxa*

The familiarity of doxa is due to subjects’ familiarity with the ordinary social. Inasmuch as we need to be familiarised with our *Lebenspraxis*, our praxis of life, we need to be familiarised with our ordinary *Lebenssinn*, our meaning of life. Doxa gives us this meaning, but it is a meaning that is not meant to be. It is its routine-driven familiarity, rather than our distance-oriented reflexivity, which makes us buy into doxa. As an unthematized theme, doxa is tremendously powerful because of, rather than despite, the fact that it lacks rational conviction by those who share it. For it is habituality, not intentionality, which drives subjects’ doxic relation to the world. Doxa is a habitualised and habitualising habit. The subjects are so immersed in the immediacy of ordinary existence that

the last thing they reflect upon is the unreflected. Paradoxically, the more familiar we are with the ordinary, the less likely we are to question it. The more immersed we are in ordinary practices, the less likely we are to reflect upon them. The *Binnenperspektivität der Alltagspraxis*<sup>11</sup> reflects the *Binnenexistenz der Alltagsperspektive*<sup>12</sup>: in the doxic experience, 'the natural and social world appears as self-evident'<sup>13</sup>. Hence, the doxic familiarity with the world converts the social environment into a quasi-natural environment. Self-evidence makes us blind. Ordinary people live ordinary lives through ordinary practices. Doxa is familiar to us because we are caught up in the immediacy of ordinary social praxis.

*(c) The Malleability of Doxa*

The malleability of doxa is due to the contingency of the ordinary social. The nature of ordinary social life is not static, but essentially dynamic: it changes over time and in different contexts. Hence, doxa is flexible because it is both temporally and spatially situated. Different societies can and, more importantly, need to develop different forms of doxa. The historical and cultural situatedness of doxa reinforces its essentially opaque and hidden nature. What drives ordinary praxis, not exclusively but at least predominantly, is its unquestioned, and equally unquestionable, adaptability to spatiotemporal transformations. This elasticity reveals 'the arbitrariness'<sup>14</sup> of doxa. The extreme case of 'a quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organization'<sup>15</sup> would represent a doxic paradise. Since the objective conditions of existence are relatively arbitrary, however, different forms of doxa vary over time and between different societies. Doxa is malleable because ordinary social praxis is historically and culturally contingent.

*(d) The Unrecognisability of Doxa*

The unrecognisability of doxa is due to the unrecognisability of the ordinary social, or, to be more precise, due to the unrecognisability of the ordinary social by the ordinary social itself. This is not to suggest that doxa cannot be identified as such. On the contrary, it can be identified but only by virtue of social-scientific, rather than ordinary, knowledge. Since doxa permeates ordinary knowledge, but can hardly be aware of itself, doxa is essentially unrecognisable by those who produce and reproduce it. This is paradoxical insofar as doxa is a form of unrecog-

nised recognition (*une reconnaissance méconnue*, or *eine unerkannte Anerkennung*).<sup>16</sup> Ironically, the ordinary subjects, who fail to recognise (*erkennen*) doxa, recognise (*anerkennen*) the power of doxa by reproducing it. The power of doxa is unrecognised recognition. The more we recognise (*anerkennen*) doxa, the less we recognise (*erkennen*) it. The more immersed we are in it, the less able we are to distance ourselves from it. 'What is most hidden is what everyone agrees about, agreeing so much that they don't even mention them, the things that are beyond question, that go without saying.'<sup>17</sup> A doxic understanding of the things that go without saying is their misrecognition, a 'collective misrecognition'<sup>18</sup>. Misrecognising them, their power is even more recognised. Doxa is unrecognisable because ordinary social praxis is based on unrecognised recognition.

(e) *The Legitimacy of Doxa*

The legitimacy of doxa is due to the need for legitimacy of the ordinary social. What holds the social together is its acceptance by the socialised. The unifying power of doxa consists in its capacity to create a sense of conformity (*Gleichheitsgefühl*), a sense of unity (*Einheitsgefühl*), and a sense of belonging (*Zugehörigkeitsgefühl*). Who or what we belong to, we accept unconditionally. 'This relation of prereflexive acceptance of the world grounded in a fundamental belief in the immediacy of the structures of the *Lebenswelt* represents the ultimate form of conformism.'<sup>19</sup> The sense of conformity, unity, and belonging describes the identity-donating function of doxic immediacy. The most stable form of legitimacy is a form of acceptability that is not only tolerated, but even embraced by ordinary subjects. The legitimacy of doxa is based on the ubiquity, familiarity, malleability, unrecognisability, and identity-creating function of doxa: 'The adherence expressed in the doxic relation to the social world is the absolute form of recognition of legitimacy through misrecognition of arbitrariness, since it is unaware of the very question of legitimacy, which arises from competition for legitimacy, and hence from conflict between groups claiming to possess it.'<sup>20</sup> The legitimacy of doxa conceals the power relations that produce and reproduce doxa in order to produce and reproduce themselves. Doxa is legitimate because ordinary social praxis is based on the need for unifying and unquestioned acceptance.

### ***iii) Knowledge and Symbolic Power: Normative Horizons***

Knowledge is articulated within the normative horizon of language. Whether we possess knowledge, or at least believe to possess it, in relation to the natural world, the social world, or our subjective world, we express knowledge *linguistically*. Inasmuch as 'language is an integral part of social life'<sup>21</sup>, social life is an integral part of language. Inasmuch as social life is permeated by power relations, language is permeated by these power relations. Inasmuch as symbolic relations are power relations, language is a form of symbolic power. The critical analysis of symbolic power is essential to any reflexive theory of the social, for it unveils the subtleness and efficiency with which power relations operate behind the backs of subjects. In order to show this, five integral components of symbolic power shall be examined: (a) symbolic power and society, (b) symbolic power and instrumentality, (c) symbolic power and universality, (d) symbolic power and validity, and (e) symbolic power and legitimacy.

#### *(a) Symbolic Power and Society*

Symbolic power is structurally embedded in society. This may seem to be a rather redundant remark, but the apparent self-evidence of the fact that the symbolic is socially situated only reaffirms its pivotal importance: reflexive sociology is the critical study of the ways in which symbolic power is *used in society*. In other words, rather than studying the '[r]elation of communication between a transmitter and a receiver'<sup>22</sup> as a 'linguistic exchange'<sup>23</sup> that is detached from social reality, it needs to be understood as a linguistic encounter that is embedded within social reality, that is, as a form of symbolic exchange that literally takes place within society. The fact that, as speakers, we are members of a 'linguistic community'<sup>24</sup> reveals that the symbolic is necessarily immersed in the social. This seemingly straightforward observation is genuinely important as it obliges us to decipher the power-ladenness of the symbolic as a direct outcome of the power-ladenness of the social. Symbolic power is a form of social power.

#### *(b) Symbolic Power and Instrumentality*

Symbolic power can be used as an instrument of social power. It 'is rare that, in ordinary existence, language functions as a pure instrument

of communication'<sup>25</sup>. The use of language as a mere vehicle of communication is the exception. The *Ausnahme* (exception) of a 'purely' communicative situation is due to its *Einnahme* (seizure) by the social. The 'interactionist description which treats interaction like an empire within an empire'<sup>26</sup> ignores the whole scope of the symbolic story: insofar as every human interaction is situated in society, it cannot be understood without taking into account the structural constitution of society as a whole. The most microsociological situation cannot escape its absorption by the macrosociological constitution of human existence. Rather than constituting a self-referential system in itself, language is situated in society. This social situatedness makes the symbolic realm penetrable by the functional needs of macrostructural power relations. Wherever there is need, there is function. The social needs to functionalise the symbolic for the sake of its own reproduction. Symbolic power is a form of instrumentalised and instrumentalising power.

*(c) Symbolic Power and Universality*

Symbolic power creates the illusion of universality. In essence, the imposition of universality is the imposition of particularity. The particular power of universality lies in its capacity to make the particular look universal, 'to impose the partial truth of a group as the truth of the objective relations between the groups'<sup>27</sup>. The universalisation of the relatively arbitrary manifests itself in the standardisation, officialisation, and institutionalisation of language. Any 'national' language has to *become* the universal language of a particular speech community in order to claim universal authority. A crucial function of the "universal" code'<sup>28</sup>, of 'normalised language'<sup>29</sup>, is to universalise and normalise domination. The less recognisable, the more efficient domination turns out to be. The more universal, the less recognisable domination turns out to be. Hence, through this 'consecration-universalisation process'<sup>30</sup>, symbolic power confers unrecognised universality to social power. Particular interests disappear behind the veil of universality. Symbolic power is a form of universalised and universalising power.

*(d) Symbolic Power and Validity*

Symbolic power needs to claim validity. At the end of the day, symbolic power is the ensemble of symbolic validity claims. Yet, rather



than conceiving validity as a transcendental quality of language, here it is regarded as an entirely social state of affairs. Validity needs to be validated in order to be valid. Hence, it is the value of validity which decides whether or not something is supposed to be valid in the first place. Validity is 'recognised value'<sup>31</sup>, that is, validity gains value through social recognition. Insofar as validity does not constitute an inherent feature of language itself, it needs to be imported from the social environment in which communication takes place. Accordingly, the Habermasian paradise-view of an 'ideal speech situation' needs to be replaced by the Bourdieusian world-view of the 'real speech situation'. The illusion of pure linguistic *Gesellschaftlichkeit*<sup>32</sup> evaporates in the light of social *Kräfteverhältnismäßigkeit*<sup>33</sup>. It is not the force of language itself which determines the validity of linguistic utterances, but, on the contrary, the *rappports de force*<sup>34</sup> outside language which determine their validity. The validity of an utterance in itself is nothing without the validity ascribed to it by the members of a social community. 'Validity claims' are actually 'value claims', 'recognition claims'; they are 'social claims'.<sup>35</sup> Symbolic power is a form of validated and validating power.

(e) *Symbolic Power and Legitimacy*

Symbolic power is nothing without legitimacy. Legitimacy gives our symbolic utterances meaning, social meaning, which allows us to *consider* them to be right or wrong, valid or invalid, appropriate or inappropriate, acceptable or unacceptable, legitimate or illegitimate. Legitimacy is an indispensable contribution to dispensable power. It destroys any illusions about the transcendental validity or detached neutrality of language: 'nothing is less neutral, when we deal with the social world, than to say something with authority, that is, with the power to make see and to make believe'<sup>36</sup>. Legitimacy is both an indispensable vehicle and the ultimate goal of symbolic power. Symbolic power without legitimacy is powerless. Any social structure whose existence is potentially at stake needs to strive for legitimacy: the legitimate language, the legitimate accent, the legitimate discourse, the legitimate norm, the legitimate culture, the legitimate *Lebensform*, in short, the legitimate social. Legitimacy is the accumulation of social recognition. This reveals the intimate relationship between knowledge and symbolic power:

symbolic *Anerkennung* (recognition) is the *Unkenntnis* (ignorance) of *Erkennbarkeit* (recognisability). The most powerful form of symbolic power is unnoticed legitimacy. What goes without saying goes. Symbolic power is a form of legitimised and legitimising power.

## Notes

1. See, for example: Bourdieu 1976a, p. 104; Bourdieu 1978, p. 67; Bourdieu 1982a, p. 9; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-c, p. 50; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 16, 19, and 220; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, pp. 68 and 72; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992g, p. 214.

2. Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 29.

3. On the Bourdieusian notion of science, see, for example: Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 7–8, 29, 40, 46–47, and 209–210; Bourdieu 1982a, pp. 9–10, 14, 25, 34, and 56; Bourdieu 1984b, p. 4; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-a; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-c; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-d; Bourdieu 1992, p. 227; Bourdieu 1995a, esp. p. 8; Bourdieu 1995b, p. 111; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 36, 40–41, 49, 130–131, 133, 137–138, 157, and 225; Bourdieu 2001b, pp. 7, 10, 13–14, and 31–32; Bourdieu 2001c, esp. pp. 5–19, 25–30, 34–42, 84–85, 192–193, 197–198, 200, 204–209, and 218–220; Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron 1968, esp. pp. 11–14, 18, 29–31, 36, 47, 51–52, 73, 83, 93, 97, and 103; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, p. 114; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 118; Wacquant 1992d, pp. 36–37.

In the secondary literature see, for example: Addi 2002, pp. 195–197; Bonnewitz 1998, pp. 10, 12–13, 17, 18, and 21–27; Bronckart and Schurmans 1999, p. 160; Caro 1980, pp. 1171, 1177, and 1194; Chauviré and Fontaine 2003, pp. 39–41; Dreyfus and Rabinow 1999, pp. 88–93; Eickelpasch 2002, pp. 54–55; Lahire 1999a, p. 5; Pinto 1998, pp. 83 and 121–125; Robbins 1999b, esp. pp. 7 and 9; Sulkunen 1982, p. 110; Swartz 1997, pp. 52–64, 249–250, and 293–295; Vandenberghe 1999, esp. pp. 32–40.

4. Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron 1968, p. 14 (my translation).

5. *Ibid.* (my translation).

6. On the Bourdieusian notion of vigilance (and the Bourdieusian notions of reflexivity and self-objectification), see, for example: Bourdieu 1976a, p. 104; Bourdieu 1978, pp. 67–68; Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 30, 40, 43, and 51–70; Bourdieu 1982a, pp. 8–11, 23–24, 29, 32, and 54; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-a, pp. 9–14; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-c; Bourdieu 1991; Bourdieu 1993c; Bourdieu 1995b, pp. 115–116; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 12–13, 28–29, 43, 113, 140, and 158; Bourdieu 1998b, p. 9; Bourdieu 2001b, pp. 7, 20, 30, and 57; Bourdieu 2001c, esp. pp. 15–20, 154, and 167–220; Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron 1968, pp. 14, 23, 31, 39, 46, 57, 62, 96, and 100–102; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, esp. pp. 68–73; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 127; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992g, p. 214; Wacquant 1992d, pp. 36–42 and 46.

In the secondary literature see, for example: Bonnewitz 1998, pp. 4, 23–24, 28, and 39; Bonnewitz 2002, p. 36; Boyne 1993, pp. 247 and 250; Champagne 2002; Colliot-Thélène 1995; Cronin 1997; Crowley 2002, pp. 156–157 and 165; de L'Estoile 2003, pp. 129 and 139; de Saint Martin 2003, p. 331; Duncan 1990, esp. p. 180; Eickelpasch 2002, pp. 57–58; Engler and Zimmermann 2002; Grenfell and James 1998, pp. 123–127; Griller 2000 [1996], pp. 195–196; Heilbron 1999; Herz 1996, pp. 236–240; Jenkins 1994, p. 101; Karakayali 2004, esp. pp. 352–354; Kögler 1997a, esp. p. 154; Lewandowski 2000, esp. pp. 49–50 and 55–56; Mesny 1998, pp. 150–151 and 174; Mesny 2002, p. 65; Mounier 2001, pp. 161 and 176; Noya 2003; Panayotopoulos 1999, p. 327; Pinto 1998, pp. 11, 71–74, 84, 150–163, and 213–215; Revel 2003, p. 101; Robbins 1999a, p. 310; Singer 1999, p. 292; Swartz 1997, pp. 10–11, 270–283, and 293–295; Terray 2003, p. 303; Vandenberghe 1999, p. 41; Vázquez García 2002, pp. 177–179, 182–183, 184, 187, 199, 201,

and 204; Verdès-Leroux 1996, p. 181; Wacquant 2004; Webb, Schirato and Danaher 2002, pp. 18–19, 46, and 49–62.

7. See, for example, Bourdieu 1980a, p. 61: 'C'est seulement par une rupture avec la vision savante, qui se vit elle-même comme une rupture avec la vision ordinaire, que l'observateur pourrait prendre en compte dans sa description de la pratique rituelle le fait de la *participation* (et du même coup le fait de sa propre rupture): [...] une conscience critique des limites inscrites dans les conditions de production de la théorie [...]' (Italics in original.) See also Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron 1968, p. 46: '[...] la dénonciation rituelle des prénotions communes [...] [et] la mise en question des prénotions savantes [...]'.

8. On the Bourdieusian distinction between ordinary knowledge and scientific knowledge, see, for example: Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 24, 43–45, 48–50, and 61; Bourdieu 1982a, pp. 10, 15, and 32; Bourdieu 1982d, pp. 18–19; Bourdieu 1995a, esp. pp. 3–5 and 10; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 119, 163, 217–218, and 225–226; Bourdieu 1999, pp. 334–335; Bourdieu 2001b, p. 15; Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron 1968, pp. 27–49 and 100–102; Bourdieu and Eagleton 1992, esp. p. 117; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992e, p. 150; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992g, p. 213.

For critical commentaries on the Bourdieusian distinction between ordinary knowledge and scientific knowledge, see, for example: Acciaioli 2000 [1981], pp. 94–95; Bohman 1997, p. 177; Bohman 1999a, p. 135; Boltanski 1990a, pp. 37–40; Boltanski 1990b; Boltanski 1998, pp. 248–251; Boltanski 1999–2000, esp. pp. 303–306; Bonnewitz 1998, pp. 27–28 and 34–39; Brubaker 1985, p. 754; Brubaker 1993, pp. 216–217; Caro 1980, p. 1177; Cicourel 1993, pp. 90 and 93; Corcuff 2002a, pp. 147 and 153–154; Corcuff 2002b, esp. pp. 66, 68, and 70; Cronin 1997, esp. pp. 206–207; Crowley 2002, pp. 155–158; de Fornel 2003, pp. 222–224; Dodier 2003, esp. pp. 8–11; Eickelpasch 2002, esp. 50, 54–56, and 59; Engler and Zimmermann 2002, esp. pp. 36–40 and 44; Grenfell and James 1998, p. 124; Griller 2000 [1996], p. 196; Hamel 2000 [1997], esp. p. 150; Heilbron 1999, esp. p. 301; Hérin 2000 [1987], pp. 4–5 and 7; Herz 1996, pp. 236–237; Hoarau 1996, esp. pp. 107 and 110.; Holton 2000; Jenkins 1992, pp. 68–73, 156, and 177; Karakayali 2004, pp. 351–354; Karsenti 1995, p. 664; Kauppi 2000 [1996], pp. 230 and 234; Kögler 1996 [1992], pp. 220–227 and 229–233; König 2003, p. 86; Mesny 1998, pp. 143–190; Mesny 2002, esp. pp. 60–61 and 63–65; Monod 1995, pp. 160–162; Mounier 2001, p. 211; Pinto 1995, p. 619; Swartz 1997, pp. 56–60 and 274; Vandenberghe 1999, pp. 40–43; Wagner 2003, pp. 217–218; Webb, Schirato and Danaher 2002, pp. 45, 52–54, 65–67, and 77–84.

9. Bourdieu 1977 [1972], pp. 165–166 and 167–168 (italics in original).

10. Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 98.

11. See Wagner 2003, p. 217. Literal translation from German into English: 'inner perspectiveness of ordinary practices'.

12. Literal translation from German into English: 'inner existence of the ordinary perspective'.

13. Bourdieu 1977 [1972], p. 164.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*

16. It should be noted that in English the word 'recognition' can have at least three different meanings: first, the 'conscious identification of something or somebody as such' (*Erkennung* or *Erkenntnis*); second, the 'granting of a certain status to something or somebody as such' (*Anerkennung*); and, third, the 'repeated identification of something or somebody as such' (*Wiedererkennung*). Here I only refer to the first two meanings. Hence, the 'unrecognised recognition of doxa' describes its capacity to be granted a powerful status (in the sense of *anerkannt*) without necessarily being identified (in the sense of *erkannt*) as such.

17. Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-c, p. 51.

18. Bourdieu 1980a, p. 114 (my translation).

19. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, p. 74.

20. Bourdieu 1977 [1972], p. 168.

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21. Thompson 1992, p. 1.
22. Bourdieu 1982f, p. 59 (my translation).
23. *Ibid.* (my translation).
24. Bourdieu 1982d, p. 18 (my translation).
25. Bourdieu 1982f, p. 60 (my translation).
26. *Ibid.*, p. 61 (my translation).
27. Bourdieu 1982a, p. 23 (my translation).
28. Bourdieu 1982e, p. 32 (my translation).
29. *Ibid.* (my translation).
30. Bourdieu 2001c, p. 58 (my translation).
31. Cf. Bourdieu and Boltanski 1975, p. 8: 'la valeur qui lui est reconnue'.
32. Literal translation from German into English: 'sociability'.
33. Literal translation from German into English: 'balance of power' or 'strength-relativity'.
34. Literal translation from French into English: 'relations of power' or 'relations of force'.
35. Cf. Bourdieu 2002b, p. 351: 'les revendications de validité [*validity claims*] devant s'affronter à des revendications concurrentes [...] pour obtenir la reconnaissance [...].'
36. Bourdieu 1982a, p. 19 (my translation).



## Chapter 6

### The Debate over Reflexive Sociology

The debate over reflexive sociology is essentially a debate over the nature of the social sciences. The controversy over the nature of any social-scientific project is always also a controversy over the specific referential context in which it emerges. Reflexive sociology can be regarded as a direct response to a context in which the social sciences appear to be fundamentally divided by an erroneous, but powerful opposition. 'Of all the oppositions that artificially divide social science, the most fundamental, and the most ruinous, is the one that is set up between subjectivism and objectivism.'<sup>1</sup> As a critical 'science of the social world'<sup>2</sup>, reflexive sociology sets itself the task of 'moving beyond the antagonism between these two modes of knowledge, while preserving the gains from each of them'<sup>3</sup>. To be more precise, reflexive sociology seeks to transcend this '*apparent* antinomy'<sup>4</sup> in order to expose the artificial and counterproductive way in which it divides the social sciences, while using the compelling and constructive insights from each of them. The centrality of the Bourdieusian attempt to overcome the dualist divisions within the social sciences can hardly be exaggerated and is reflected in the fact that it is repeatedly referred to in the literature.<sup>5</sup>

The social sciences have always been characterised by debates about the ‘grand dichotomies’ of social thought: the objective versus the subjective, the social versus the individual, the material versus the symbolic, the economic versus the cultural, the universal versus the particular, the public versus the private, the ordinary versus the scientific, the practical versus the theoretical, the pragmatic versus the transcendental, the empirical versus the conceptual, the visible versus the hidden, the descriptive versus the normative—to mention only a few of the most important dichotomies that are present in both classical and contemporary social thought. Despite the relative importance of each of these dichotomies<sup>6</sup>, Bourdieusian reflexive sociology seeks to show that the gap between objectivism and subjectivism represents the most crucial of these divisions. Yet, before we can understand how this dichotomous division is to be overcome, we need to comprehend each side of this artificial separation, as well as its relation to so-called scholastic thought.

***i) The Aporias of Objectivism: The Paradigm of Objectivity***

The aporias of objectivism are rooted in its monolithic emphasis on the paradigm of objectivity. The prioritisation of objectivity leads to a one-sided, object-oriented account of the social. The general assumption on which objectivism is based is that both the constitution and the evolution of society are primarily driven by underlying structural forces, which escape the consciousness of human subjects, but which nevertheless largely determine their daily actions. In order to understand the full scope of this objectivist view of the social, we need to comprehend its main theoretical underpinnings. In essence, there are three closely interrelated forms of objectivism: (a) structuralist objectivism, (b) determinist objectivism, and (c) substantialist objectivism.

*(a) The Structuralist-Objectivist Conception of the Social*

Structuralist objectivism is based on the assumption that underlying structures govern both the nature and the development of the social. Prioritising the power of structure, it suggests that we are able to explain the constitution of society only by deciphering the constitution of social structures. Objectivism, in this sense, is not only a ‘structuralism of

reality' but also a 'realism of structure': inasmuch as structures exist within and through social reality, social reality exists within and through structures. An appropriate understanding of structures is supposed to represent the *key* to an appropriate understanding of social reality, since the latter is regarded as an outcome of the former.

The main explanatory deficiency of this approach is that it does not account for the processual nature of the social: it fails to explore the motivational driving forces that can create and steer social change. 'In order to escape the *realism of the structure*, which hypostatizes systems of objective relations by converting them into totalities already constituted outside of individual history and group history, it is necessary to pass from the *opus operatum* to the *modus operandi*, from statistical regularity or algebraic structure to the principle of the production of this observed order [...].'<sup>7</sup> Hence, if we focus exclusively on the objective relations of society, we run the risk of erroneously attributing a totalising power to their structural constitution. To move from the *opus operatum* to the *modus operandi* means to do justice to the inherently processual nature of the social, of social *praxis*. The structuralist-objectivist account of the social is tautological in that it explains structure in terms of structure, the *opus operatum* in terms of the *opus operatum*. To move beyond this tautological view, the *opus operatum* needs to be understood in relation to the *modus operandi*. In other words, as social actors, we are not only operated upon, but we also operate. Thus, we need to move from a 'theory of structure' to a 'theory of practice'<sup>8</sup>.

*(b) The Determinist-Objectivist Conception of the Social*

Determinist objectivism ascribes not only an omnipresent, but also an omnipotent role to the hidden structures of the social. 'Objectivist critique is justified in questioning the official definitions of practices and uncovering the real *determinants* hidden under the proclaimed motivations.'<sup>9</sup> In other words, it is assumed that the underlying structures of the social largely *determine* the nature of the social. The structural determinacy of the social is tremendously powerful because of, not despite, the fact that its existence cannot be immediately perceived by ordinary social actors. The predominance of the underlying structures may have to be mediated by subjects, that is, it needs to be reproduced by subjects in order to exist. Yet, since subjects are permanently caught



up in social practices, they are not aware of the underlying structural logic of their actions. Their immediate immersion does not allow for mediated reflection. The 'realism of structure' is the 'determinism of structure'. Structures are reproduced by subjects without them being aware of it.

The explanatory weakness of this approach lies not only in the structuralist hypostatisation of objective relations, but also, more importantly, in the determinist hypostatisation of the power that these objective relations are supposed to possess over subjects. Structures may be omnipresent, but this does not necessarily prove that they are omnipotent. If objectivism 'explains social life in terms of mind-independent and agent-independent elements'<sup>10</sup>, then both mind and agency are treated as decorative appendages of the social. Yet, if mind and agency do play at least a peripheral, or even pivotal, role in constituting the social, then the determinist-objectivist conception of the social has to be rejected. In other words, society is inconceivable without meaning-laden *practices* realised by social agents.

*(c) The Substantialist-Objectivist Conception of the Social*

Substantialist objectivism interprets social structures as deep-seated, concealed, and not directly observable substances which do not necessarily coincide with their superficial, overt, and directly perceivable appearance. Substantialism is the idea that '*behind* phenomena there are substantial realities'<sup>11</sup>. Hence, the social is not only determined by underlying structures, but these structures cannot be immediately perceived. 'The underlying structures are not immediately visible to the people subjected to them, nor to an observer. It is the task of the social scientist to uncover these latent structures in order to explain the surface level.'<sup>12</sup> The gap between the underlying structures and their surface level manifests itself in the gap between the reflexive social scientist and the unreflexive social agent. Whereas the former is motivated by scientific, vigilant, and distant reasoning, the latter is driven by ordinary, practical, and immersed reasoning. 'Objectivism, which sets out to establish objective regularities (structures, laws, systems of relationships, etc.) independent of individual consciousnesses and wills, introduces a radical *discontinuity* between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge, rejecting the more or less explicit representations

with which the latter arms itself as “rationalizations”, “pre-notions”, or “ideologies”. It thus challenges the project of identifying the science of the social world with scientific description of pre-scientific experience [...].<sup>13</sup> The substantialist conception of the social is categorically distrustful of the pre-scientific, immediate, and doxic experience of the world, favouring the scientific, distant, and anti-doxic vision of the world instead.

The explanatory insufficiency of this approach consists in its categorical delegitimisation of subjective experience. It is not so much the validity of ordinary knowledge according to scientific standards which has to be proven, but the value of immediate experience for sociological analysis which must not be underestimated. Only by looking at the ways in which people make sense, or fail to make sense, of the world can we understand social existence. We need to *verstehen* people’s *Verstehen* as an integral component of the social, no matter how distorted, mistaken, or doxic their understanding of the world may be.<sup>14</sup> Even misunderstanding is a form of understanding. This is not to deny the gap that exists between ordinary and scientific knowledge; on the contrary, reflexive sociology insists upon the importance of this discrepancy. Yet, this is to repudiate the view that the subjective production of meaning is absolutely worthless because of ordinary people’s inability to uncover the structural determinacy of their lives. Even people’s misunderstanding, misrepresentation, and misrecognition of structure can make the social scientist understand, represent, and recognise both the validity and the value of subjective experience.

## ***ii) The Aporias of Subjectivism: The Paradigm of Subjectivity***

The aporias of subjectivism stem from its celebration of the paradigm of subjectivity. The paradigm of subjectivity is diametrically opposed to the paradigm of objectivity: subjectivism can be regarded as the theoretical counterpart to objectivism. Yet, the presuppositions of the former are hardly any less problematic than the presuppositions of the latter. Just as the monolithic embracement of the paradigm of objectivity leads to a one-sided, object-oriented account of the social, the exclusive prioritisation of the paradigm of subjectivity results in a one-sided, subject-oriented account of the social. According to a subjectivist account of

the social, both the constitution and the evolution of society are largely controlled and meaningfully determined by the social actors themselves. In order to understand the far-reaching theoretical implications of this view, we need to examine the main theoretical propositions, prevalent in the social sciences, which form the basis of subjectivism. In essence, there are three main forms of subjectivism: (a) voluntarist subjectivism, (b) rationalist subjectivism, and (c) phenomenologist subjectivism.

*(a) The Voluntarist-Subjectivist Conception of the Social*

Voluntarist subjectivism is deeply attached to the philosophy of consciousness, which holds that what distinguishes human beings from animals is, most fundamentally, their unique capacity to make sense of the world by virtue of their consciousness. Consciousness is the cognitive precondition for human autonomy and individual liberty; it provides us with free will, with *libre arbitre*, with *volonté*. Thus, the voluntarist-subjectivist conception of the social is diametrically opposed to the structuralist-objectivist account, for it gives priority to the consciousness of the human subject, rather than to the unconscious of social structure. This prioritisation of consciousness has tremendous consequences for the theorisation of the social: far from believing that underlying structures govern both the constitution and the evolution of society, a voluntarist-subjectivist view of the social is based on the assumption that the power of human consciousness determines the nature of the social.

The explanatory difficulties inherent in the voluntarist-subjectivist view of the social are to be located precisely in the underestimation of the social itself. In philosophical terms, the voluntarist-subjectivist account, 'which portrays action as the deliberate pursuit of a conscious intention, the free project of a conscience positing its own ends'<sup>15</sup>, is undoubtedly very attractive, as it puts the conscious human subject in the centre of existence. In sociological terms, however, this view is rather naïve and too subject-centred, as it fails to add a crucial element to the picture: the constraining influence of the social environment upon the constitution of consciousness. Even if we reject the structuralist-objectivist view of the social, we cannot ignore the constraining power of underlying structural forces which shape the constitution of human consciousness. Consciousness needs to be conscious of its unconscious to be truly conscious. Subject and object go hand in hand. Hence, we need to replace

the transcendently absolved 'knowing subject' (*le sujet connaissant*) by the socially constrained 'acting subject' (*le sujet agissant*).<sup>16</sup>

*(b) The Rationalist-Subjectivist Conception of the Social*

In the social sciences, subjectivism has found an influential and systematic formulation in rational choice theory or, in Bourdieusian terminology, rational actor theory.<sup>17</sup> According to this approach, what distinguishes the human form of consciousness from other, more rudimentary, forms of consciousness is rationality. Generally, the 'philosophy of choice'<sup>18</sup> extracts the power of choice from the power of rationality. More specifically, rational actor theory conceives of choice as based on rationality ultimately oriented towards maximising utility. 'The "rational actor" theory, which seeks the "origin" of acts, strictly economic or not, in an "intention" of "consciousness", is often associated with a narrow conception of the "rationality" of practices, an economism which regards as rational [...] those practices that are consciously oriented by the pursuit of maximum (economic) profit at minimum (economic) cost.'<sup>19</sup> In other words, rationality is the consciousness-based, goal-oriented, and utility-driven motor of human action. As rational actors, we are aware of our intentions and we intend to be aware of them. Consequently, *Zweckrationalität*—expressed in instrumental, strategic, and functional forms of rationality—is not to be derived from the underlying structural imperatives inherent in the specific conditions of the social environment, but from the social actors themselves. For purposive rationality represents not a socio-historically contingent, but a biodispositionally universal driving force of social action. We are utility-maximising actors because we *are* utility-maximising actors, not because we are being, or have become, so. Thus, rational actor theory is based on essentialist ('we are'), rather than contextualist ('we are being') or historicist ('we have become'), assumptions. This idea of an intrinsic goal-oriented, rather than socially determined, rationality has serious implications for the theorisation of the social: far from taking into account the determining influence of social structure upon the actors' predominant form of rationality, a rationalist-subjectivist account derives the structural determinacy of the social from the rational determinacy of the actors themselves.

The explanatory weakness of the rationalist-subjectivist view of the social lies in its paradigmatic reliance upon the power of rationality,

especially purposive rationality. The main problem with the rationalist-subjectivist view is that it reduces *social* action to *finalist* action, as if every social action were derived from goal-oriented rationality. Ironically, it puts the Habermasian conception of social action upside-down: the Habermasian imperative of communicative action, which is ultimately oriented towards reaching *understanding*<sup>20</sup>, is diametrically opposed to the finalist imperative of purposive action, which is ultimately oriented towards reaching *utility*. Even if we reject the determinist-objectivist view of the social<sup>21</sup>, we cannot fall into the other extreme of reducing social action to a context-independent, rationality-driven, and goal-oriented product of human consciousness. This rationalist-subjectivist view of the social fails to take into account several aspects: first, the extent to which human action is also contextually, rather than naturally, determined; second, the extent to which human action is also bodily and habitually, rather than rationally and intentionally, determined; and, third, the extent to which human action is multicausally, rather than monocausally, determined. Hence, we need to replace the ‘natural, rational, and one-dimensional subject’ (*le sujet naturel, rationnel et unidimensionnel*) by the ‘contextual, corporeal, and multidimensional subject’ (*le sujet contextuel, corporel et multidimensionnel*).

(c) *The Phenomenologist-Subjectivist Conception of the Social*

The subjectivist theories that put particular emphasis on the production of meaning in people’s everyday life can be broadly characterised as phenomenologist-subjectivist accounts. More concretely speaking, they can be identified with *phenomenological*, *ethnomethodological*, and *interactionist* approaches to the social.<sup>22</sup> Despite the substantial differences between them, these accounts share one important feature: they focus on the ordinary construction of subjective meaning and regard social actors as competent and meaning-producing protagonists of social reality. Thus, these microsociological approaches are particularly preoccupied with the actors’ production of meaning, which takes place in their lifeworlds, the nucleus of social existence. The substantialist-objectivist conception of the social stands in direct contrast to the phenomenologist-subjectivist conception of the social: whereas the former delegitimises the validity of ordinary knowledge,

thereby vehemently rejecting 'the illusion about the transparency'<sup>23</sup> of the social world, the latter celebrates the validity of ordinary knowledge, thereby giving central importance to the mundane facets of social life.

The explanatory inadequacy of the phenomenologist-subjectivist view of the social consists in its naïve interpretation of the ordinary production of meaning. The point is not to deny the importance of the lifeworld for the constitution of the social. On the contrary, in opposition to the positivist Durkheimian view of social analysis, the phenomenologist-subjectivist accounts rightly point out that 'social science cannot "treat social facts as things"'<sup>24</sup>. Hence, what distinguishes the social sciences from the natural sciences is their object of study: the social sciences produce knowledge about knowledge-producing entities. In other words, since 'human beings make meaningful the world which makes them'<sup>25</sup>, this very production of meaning, stressed by hermeneutic philosophy, constitutes an essential part of social reality. The fact that social reality is always both a reality 'in-itself' and a reality 'for-itself' indicates that human 'always-alreadiness' (*Immerschonheit*) is ineluctably accompanied by human 'always-stillness' (*Immernochheit*). Thus, social reality is 'always still to be': still to be constructed and still to be interpreted by subjects. Nevertheless, the phenomenologist-subjectivist conception of the social poses several problems. First, since it treats the lifeworld as 'an empire within an empire'<sup>26</sup>, it underestimates the macrosociological embeddedness of even the most intimate intersubjective encounters.<sup>27</sup> Second, since it portrays the lifeworld as an endogenous zone of social interaction, and due to its 'blindness to objective structures, to relations of force'<sup>28</sup>, it fails to account for the penetration of the lifeworld by exogenous power relations. And, third, since it presents phenomenological realities as realities in themselves, it remains trapped in a form of 'everyday essentialism'<sup>29</sup> which converts phenomenological realities into substantial realities, ignoring the 'particular conditions which make the doxic experience of the social world possible'<sup>30</sup> in the first place and forgetting that the underlying objective structures of social reality 'are not immediately perceivable'<sup>31</sup> by actors. In short, we must not overlook the fact that the '*gemeinschaftliche Subjekt*' (*le sujet de la communauté*) is always also a '*gesellschaftliches Subjekt*' (*un sujet de la société*).

### **iii) The Aporias of Scholasticism: The Paradigm of Reason**

The aporias of objectivism and subjectivism cannot only be understood by referring to the *internal* contradictions and explanatory shortcomings of the two approaches. They can, and must, also be comprehended by taking into account the *external* conditions of the socio-specific context in which both approaches emerge. Objectivist thought and, even more so, subjectivist thought emerge within the *skholè*: the privileged scholastic situation of freedom from necessity, which allows scholastic thinkers to produce scholastic thought.<sup>32</sup> Scholastic thinkers 'remain trapped in the scholastic dilemma of determinism and freedom'<sup>33</sup> because their privileged scholastic situatedness in the social space allows them to disregard the praxeological intertwinement of object and subject.

If the questionability of dichotomist thought is intimately inter-related with the peculiarity of the scholastic situatedness in the social space, then the critique of objectivism and subjectivism needs to go hand in hand with the critique of scholasticism. Hence, in order to overcome the aporias of objectivism and subjectivism we need to overcome the aporias of scholasticism, first identifying what these are. In essence, scholastic thought is based on the paradigm of reason. Yet, rather than formulating a straightforward and one-dimensional definition, it is necessary to emphasise the multifaceted nature of scholastic thought, if the complexity of the difficulties that arise from it are to be fully appreciated. Ten main fallacies can be identified to show why scholastic thought represents a deeply contentious form of social or, to be more precise, anti-social thought: (a) theoreticism, (b) intellectualism, (c) universalism, (d) rationalism, (e) transcendentalism, (f) purism, (g) foundationalism (h) neutralism, (i) autonomism, and (j) hegemonism.

#### *(a) Scholastic Theoreticism*

Scholastic thought is theoreticist in that it is based on 'theoretical reason', rather than 'practical reason'.<sup>34</sup> Caught up in the self-sufficient intellectual exercise of producing theory for the sake of, and only in relation to, theory, the scholastic fallacy constitutes 'the ordinary error of professionals of logic, namely that which consists in "taking the things of logic for the logic of things"'<sup>35</sup>. In other words, by 'sliding from the model of reality to the reality of the model'<sup>36</sup>, the conceptual force of theory is

erroneously translated into the existential force of being. Social reality is not only ignored, but even replaced by theoretical reality: theory becomes a reality in-itself seemingly detached from its genuine social attachment. This 'triumphalism of theoretical reason is paid for in its inability, from the very beginning, to move beyond simple recording of the duality of the paths of knowledge, the path of appearances and the path of truth, doxa and episteme, common sense and science, and its incapacity to win for science the truth of what science is constructed *against*.'<sup>37</sup>

More precisely, scholastic theoreticism is problematic in at least three respects. First, since it tends to rely on the power of theoretical reason, it fails to account for the predominance of practical reason in ordinary social reality (*self-referential theoreticism*). Second, since it tends to conceptualise reality in purely theoretical terms, it fails to comprehend itself as part of social praxis (*metaphysical theoreticism*). And, third, since it tends to reproduce a purely theory-oriented conception of knowledge, it fails to overcome the epistemological duality between theoretical and practical knowledge (*dualist theoreticism*). Hence, in order to overcome scholastic theoreticism we need to replace 'self-referential, metaphysical, and theoretical reason' (*la raison autoréférentielle, métaphysique et théorique*) by 'social, situated, and practical reason' (*la raison sociale, située et pratique*).<sup>38</sup>

(b) *Scholastic Intellectualism*

Scholastic thought is intellectualist in that it is based on 'intellectual reason', rather than 'socially committed reason'. The intellectual proposition of scholastic thoughtfulness is articulated through the intellectual disposition of scholastic selfishness embedded in the intellectual position of scholastic needlessness. The privileged existence of the scholastic intellectual is due to 'the situation of *skholè*, the free time, freed from the urgencies of the world, that allows a free and liberated relation to those urgencies and to the world'<sup>39</sup>. The irony of the scholastic situation, the *skholè*, arises from the fact that the very situation of taken-for-grantedness allows for the taken-for-grantedness of the situation: living beyond necessity makes thinking beyond necessity possible. Scholastic life creates scholastic thought. For it is precisely the privileged situation of the intellectual that allows the scholastic thinker to forget about this



privilege. The privilege within the social produces thought beyond the social. The scholastic privilege of thinking would be unthinkable without the privileged scholar. Paradoxically, scholastic thought is anti-doxically doxic: it is anti-doxic in that it seeks to *distinguish* itself from the taken-for-grantedness of ordinary, doxic thought; yet, it is also doxic in that its own existence is *based* on the very taken-for-grantedness of scholastic thought. If, in the Adornian sense, the realisation of materialism would be its abolishment<sup>40</sup>, in the scholastic sense, the realisation of intellectualism would be precisely its maintenance. The condition of scholastic thought creates the belief in unconditionality: the apparent 'freedom from the constraints and urgencies of practice which is presented as the *sine qua non* of access to truth'<sup>41</sup> constitutes, for intellectuals, a 'theodicy of their own privilege'<sup>42</sup>, a justification given by the justifiers themselves. The realisation of socially committed reason, reason with and through the social, would be the abolition of intellectualist reason, reason without and beyond the social. Hence, in order to overcome scholastic intellectualism we need to replace 'intellectual reason' (*la raison intellectuelle*) by 'socially committed reason' (*la raison socialement engagée*).<sup>43</sup>

(c) Scholastic Universalism

Scholastic thought is universalist in that it is based on the idea of 'universal reason', rather than 'particular reason'. As such, it strives for *Allgemeingültigkeit*, for 'universal validity'<sup>44</sup>. The systematic attempt to develop and defend a set of universal principles claiming validity beyond the particularity of a specific societal context has been most illustratively undertaken by the Kantian philosophy of the subject. The idea of the Kantian subject is founded on the presupposition of 'a single, fixed point of view [...], the adoption of the posture of a motionless spectator installed at a point (of view) [...]'. This singular viewpoint can also be regarded as universal, since all the "subjects" who find themselves placed there [...] are, like the Kantian subject, assured of having the same objective view'<sup>45</sup>. Thus, the scholastic claim to universality fulfils two functions at the same time: while embracing the attractive idea of a universal subject, it justifies the enlightening mission of the scholastic thinker. Accordingly, both the object and the subject of pursuit *appear* to be justified. The power of philosophical universality is to conceal

its sociological particularity. 'A number of universalistic manifestos or universal prescriptions are no more than the product of (unconscious) universalizing of the particular case, that is, of the privilege constituting the scholastic condition. This purely theoretical universalization leads to a fictitious universalism [...]. To grant "humanity" to all, but in a purely formal way, is to exclude from it, under an appearance of humanism, all those who are deprived of the means of realizing it.'<sup>46</sup> The sociological particularity of scholastic thinking can be disguised under the philosophical universality of scholastic thought. The particular reason of scholastic thinkers is presented as *the* universal reason of humanity. Hence, in order to overcome scholastic universalism we need to replace 'universal reason' (*la raison universelle*) by 'particular reason' (*la raison particulière*).<sup>47</sup>

(d) *Scholastic Rationalism*

Scholastic thought is rationalist in that it is based on the idea of 'reasoning reason', rather than 'reasonable reason'. The emphatic espousal of rationalism is expressed in the view that reason, rather than bodily experience, determines the human engagement with the world. The scholastic belief in the power of rationality creates the 'illusion of (intellectual) mastery of oneself that is so deeply ingrained in intellectuals'<sup>48</sup>. The empire of reason is converted into the empire of being. The rational controllability of the former is simply translated into the rational controllability of the latter, as if the determinants of social reality could be reduced to the determinants of reason. The self-fulfilling prophecy of reason consists in its narcissistic reliance upon itself. Scholastic reason is the belief in sovereign existence: the creation of a 'sovereign subject'<sup>49</sup> is founded on its rational capacity to stand above reality, as if reason stood above the social. 'Reasonable reason' seeks to uncover the social conditions for the possibility of reason.<sup>50</sup> 'Reasoning reason', by contrast, portrays the conditions for the possibility of reason as the conditions derived from reason itself. Consequently, the power of social relations is reduced to the power of rationality or, in the case of Habermasian social theory, to the power of communicative rationality.<sup>51</sup> Hence, in order to overcome scholastic rationalism we need to replace 'reasoning reason' (*la raison raisonnante*) by 'reasonable reason' (*la raison raisonnable*).<sup>52</sup>

(e) *Scholastic Transcendentalism*

Scholastic thought is transcendentalist in that it is based on the idea of 'transcendental reason', rather than 'immanent reason'. The scholastic vision of beyondness is derived from 'the illusion of the transcendence of transhistorical and transpersonal reason'<sup>53</sup>. Thus, reason appears to exist beyond the historical and personal constraints embodied by those who invented, and keep inventing, it. Transcendental embodiment is the negation of embodiment. Transcendental reason is bodiless, for it is imagined to exist beyond the tangibility of profane life. The intangibility (*Ungreifbarkeit*) of the transcendental cannot be comprehended (*begriffen*) through the tangibility (*Greifbarkeit*) of ordinary existence but only through the intangibility (*Ungreifbarkeit*) of reason itself: *Ungreifbarkeit kann nur durch das Ungreifbare selbst begriffen und angegriffen werden*.<sup>54</sup> The empire of transcendental reason is an empire that can only be judged by its own judges. The incommensurability between the banal concerns of socially immanent reason and the sublime concerns of transcendental reason seems to make an ordinary measurement of the transordinary impossible. Beyondness can only be appreciated from 'within the beyond', not from 'within the within'. Transcendental thought is protected by a self-imposed insurance policy: transcendence is insured against the invasion from immanence. The *rappports de force sociales, historiques et personnels* are literally sought to be transcended by the *rappports de force trans-sociaux, transhistoriques et transpersonnels*. In other words, *rappports* are being transcended by *pas des rapports*. Hence, in order to overcome scholastic transcendentalism we need to replace 'transcendental reason' (*la raison transcendante*) by 'immanent reason' (*la raison immanente*).<sup>55</sup>

(f) *Scholastic Purism*

Scholastic thought is purist in that it is based on the idea of 'pure reason', rather than 'possible reason'. The idea of 'pure reason' is intimately interrelated with the idea of a 'pure subject' able to produce 'pure knowledge'<sup>56</sup> about itself and the world by which it is surrounded. Purity is a reality 'in-itself', rather than 'for-itself': purity simply *is*, or at least claims to be. It exists regardless of the regard of the regarding subject. Ironically, however, the purist 'in-itself' is a 'for-itself' because the

former is *imagined* by the latter: the state of purity is constructed by the thought of purity. The scholastic gaze refuses to face up to its impure 'in-itselfness', its position in the social space, since this would destroy its illusion of purity all together. 'There is nothing that "pure" thought finds it harder to think than *skholè*, the first and most determinant of all the social conditions of possibility of "pure thought"'<sup>57</sup>. The possibility of purity is built upon the impurity of possibility. Hence, in order to overcome scholastic purism we need to replace 'pure reason' (*la raison pure*) by 'possible reason' (*la raison possible*).<sup>58</sup>

(g) *Scholastic Foundationalism*

Scholastic thought is foundationalist in that it is based on the idea of 'foundational reason', rather than 'historical reason'. The idea of 'foundational reason' suggests that reason possesses an underlying basis or principle. The irony of foundational reason consists in its comfortable self-sufficiency: the foundations of reason are to be found in and through reason itself, rather than outside of reason. Thus, the ultimate grounds of reason are to be discovered in the endogenous grounds of reason itself, rather than in its exogenous socio-historical grounds. The historicisation of reason would undermine its absolutist claim to transhistorical universality. 'Paradoxically, however, it is perhaps on condition that reason is subjected to the test of the most radical historicization, in particular by destroying the *illusion of foundation* by recalling the arbitrariness of beginnings and by historical and sociological critique of the instruments of historical and sociological science itself, that one can hope to save it from arbitrariness and historical relativization.'<sup>59</sup>

Reflexive-sociological reasoning is suspicious of any kind of self-grounding reason beyond the historical grounds of society. It is not society that is embedded in reason, but, on the contrary, reason that is embedded in society. Therefore, we need 'to sacrifice the *anxiety over the ultimate foundation* to the historical critique of unconscious presuppositions, to repudiate the mystical ambition to reach the essence in a single leap in favor of the patient reconstruction of genesis'<sup>60</sup>. The supposedly unconditional foundations of reason are to be found in the conditioning foundations of society. The reflexive-sociological insight that reason is ineluctably embedded in the 'social foundations'<sup>61</sup> of human

existence destroys the project of ‘foundationalist rationalism’, striving for ‘historical rationalism’ or ‘rationalist historicism’ instead.<sup>62</sup> ‘Rationalism too easily grants itself its *raison d’être*. It is perhaps on condition of radicalizing the historical critique of the supposed “foundations” of reason’<sup>63</sup> that the contingency of reason can be derived from the contingency of history itself. Hence, in order to overcome scholastic foundationalism we need to replace ‘foundational reason’ (*la raison fondatrice*) by ‘historical reason’ (*la raison historique*).<sup>64</sup>

(h) *Scholastic Neutralism*

Scholastic thought is neutralist in that it is based on the idea of ‘neutral reason’, rather than ‘interested reason’. The power of ‘neutral reason’ consists in portraying interestedness as disinterestedness. The interest in disinterestedness is epitomised in the belief that science is, or at least can be, value-free. The illusion of scientific *Wertfreiheit*<sup>65</sup> is rooted in its imagined rootlessness: ignoring the socio-historical embeddedness of science, the neutrality of knowledge is claimed to derive precisely from its detachment from the social. If scientific thought is believed to be detached from the social, then it does not form part of the social, then it is literally impartial. Thus, the scholastic illusion of neutrality is nourished by ‘the myth of the “impartial spectator”’<sup>66</sup>, ignoring that the ‘impartial spectator’ is nourished by partial social interests. The interest to defend the scholastic situation is in the interest of the scholastic thinker.

To cover the structural interestedness with the veil of neutrality gives legitimacy to what has been legitimised by itself: scholastic thought. Yet, the scholastic illusion of neutrality evaporates in the light of five fundamental objections that can be raised on the basis of a reflexive-sociological view of knowledge. First, since knowledge is always socially embedded, it is necessarily normative (*Erkenntnisnormativität*). Second, since knowledge is always produced from a specific standpoint in the social space, even so-called descriptive knowledge is situation-laden (*Erkenntnisstandpunkt*). Third, since the knowledge-producing subject, epitomised in the scientist, fulfils a specific function in society, the production of knowledge is impregnated with the social interestedness of the knowledge-producer, who is—consciously or unconsciously—determined to fulfil this function (*Erkenntnisfunktion*). Fourth, since knowledge-producing subjects are intellectually and socially competing

subjects, the production of knowledge is permeated by scientific power struggles (*Erkenntniskampf*). Fifth, since knowledge can be used in one way or another, the production of knowledge can be instrumentalised for extra-scientific, notably economic, purposes (*Erkenntnisnutzung*). In short, since even the most remote form of scholastic *Erkenntnistheorie* is still a form of social *Erkenntnispraxis*, the production of knowledge is unavoidably driven by the imperatives of social praxis: normativity, positionality, functionality, conflictuality, and instrumentality. In other words, knowledge is pervaded by interestedness. The interestedness of thought (*Erkenntnisinteresse*) reflects the interestedness of the social (*Gesellschaftsinteresse*). Hence, in order to overcome scholastic neutralism we need to replace ‘neutral reason’ (*la raison neutre*) by ‘interested reason’ (*la raison intéressée*).<sup>67</sup>

(i) *Scholastic Autonomism*

Scholastic thought is autonomist in that it is based on the idea of ‘autonomous reason,’ rather than ‘dependent reason.’ The autonomisation of reason is directly derived from the autonomisation of those who articulate it. The autonomisation of thought is a reflection of the autonomisation of the thinker. Thus, the autonomy of scholastic thought is both symbolic and material: it is symbolic because scholastic reason is a form of self-sufficient reason that seeks and proclaims independence from the allegedly inferior facets of existence; it is also material, however, because scholastic reason’s relative independence from necessity is indicative of the scholastic thinker’s relative independence from materiality. Inasmuch as symbolic autonomy strives for relative independence from material heteronomy, material autonomy strives for relative independence from symbolic heteronomy. In other words, scholastic thought conceals its material dependence upon necessity through relative symbolic independence, and it hides its symbolic dependence upon necessity through relative material independence. Scholastic autonomy is real sham, for scholastic thought factually *is* relatively autonomous while at the same time *pretending* to be so.

Scholastic reason is equipped with the exceptional privilege of forgetting about its privileged exceptionality: self-perpetuation makes the self so perpetuated by itself that anything beyond itself seems irrelevant. Immersion makes us see the landscape of our immersion, but

not its frontiers and even less so its surroundings. 'Those who are immersed, in some cases from birth, in scholastic universes resulting from a long process of *autonomization* are led to forget the *exceptional* historical and social conditions that make possible a view of the world and of cultural products that is characterized by self-evidence and naturalness.'<sup>68</sup> When autonomy becomes normal, the exceptional becomes natural. The *Einnahme* (absorption) by the *Ausnahme* (exception) makes scholastic thought *voreingenommen* (prejudiced): what it takes, it takes for granted. Exceptional conditionality converts possibility into unconditionality. The condition that believes itself unconditional is necessarily self-centred. 'Scholastic ethnocentrism'<sup>69</sup> is 'inseparable from the progressive autonomization of social microcosms based on privilege'<sup>70</sup>. The *Kosmosimmanenz* of scholastic reason does not allow for its *Kosmostranszendenz* as this would undermine its very autonomy. Yet, only if we go beyond this blind and blinding immanence are we allowed to recognise autonomy's dependence on transcendence of immanence: its structural dependence on imagined symbolic transcendence of real social immanence. Hence, in order to overcome scholastic autonomism we need to replace 'autonomous reason' (*la raison autonome*) by 'dependent reason' (*la raison dépendante*).<sup>71</sup>

(j) *Scholastic Hegemonism*

Scholastic thought is hegemonist in that it is based on the idea of 'philosophical reason', rather than 'sociological reason'. The scholastic aspiration towards the ultimate hegemony in the sphere of knowledge manifests itself in 'the age-old battle of philosophy against sociology'<sup>72</sup>. The rise of sociology is to philosophy what science is to religion: a threat to the self-declared ultimate authority of an arbitrary historical authority. The competition between philosophy and sociology represents a symbolic struggle over and for the right to call themselves the master in the house of being. The main difficulty in this rivalry results from a problem of incommensurability: not only is this a controversy over the question of which discipline has the right to call itself the master in the house of being; but, more fundamentally, what is at stake is the question of what the house of being is. Both questions are inextricably linked, since the object of study depends on the study of the object. In other words, depending on who the master is, the house of being is portrayed

differently. The normativity of the perspective changes the descriptibility of the object. The rivalry between philosophy and sociology is a competitive struggle not only over who describes reality more adequately, but also over what is to be described in the first place. Whereas philosophy's house of being is a house of *allgemeiner Gültigkeit*<sup>73</sup>, sociology's house of being is a house of *allgemeiner Gesellschaftlichkeit*<sup>74</sup>.

Philosophy's attempt to hegemonise itself by claiming *allgemeine Gültigkeit* is foiled by sociology's recognition of philosophy's unavoidable *allgemeiner Gesellschaftlichkeit*. Philosophy's 'hegemonic ambition'<sup>75</sup> can be seen as the accumulated interest in the quest for theory, intellectuality, universality, rationality, transcendentality, purity, foundationality, neutrality, and autonomy. The reflexive-sociological analysis developed above has sought to explain the relative arbitrariness of each of these hegemonic desires. Hence, in order to overcome scholastic hegemonism we need to replace 'philosophical reason' (*la raison philosophique*) by 'sociological reason' (*la raison sociologique*).<sup>76</sup>

## Notes

1. Bourdieu 1990 [1980], p. 25. See also original publication: Bourdieu 1980a, p. 43: 'De toutes les oppositions qui divisent artificiellement la science sociale, la plus fondamentale, et la plus ruineuse, est celle qui s'établit entre le subjectivisme et l'objectivisme.'

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.* (translation modified).

4. *Ibid.*, p. 46 (italics added) (my translation).

5. See, for example: Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 43, 46, 78, 87, 103, 178, 202, 234, and 242; Bourdieu 1982a, pp. 35–37; Bourdieu 1982d, p. 14; Bourdieu 1982e, p. 36; Bourdieu 1984b, p. 5; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-d, pp. 55, 57, and 59; Bourdieu 1994a, p. 169; Bourdieu 1994b, p. 3; Bourdieu 1995a, p. 8; Bourdieu 1995b, p. 120; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 16–17, 43, 77, 122, 157, 159–160, 163–167, 185, and 225; Bourdieu 1998b, pp. 9 and 110; Bourdieu 2005 [2000], pp. 210–213; Bourdieu 2001b, pp. 7, 24, and 31; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 76, 151, and 153; Bourdieu 2002b, p. 353; Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron 1968, pp. 34, 93–94, and 101; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, p. 66; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, pp. 121–122; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992e, pp. 151 and 162.

In the secondary literature see, for example: Aboulafia 1999, pp. 153–154 and 171; Accardo 1997, pp. 200, 229, and 257–258; Addi 2002, pp. 127 and 131; Bohman 1997, p. 171; Bohman 1999a, p. 130; Boltanski 2003, pp. 156–157; Boltanski 2004, p. 4; Boltanski and Thévenot 1991, p. 40; Bonnewitz 1998, pp. 2, 12–13, 30–31, 59, and 66; Bonnewitz 2002, p. 39; Bouveresse 1995, pp. 580–581; Boyne 1993, p. 250; Bronckart and Schurmans 1999, pp. 153, 155, and 164; Brubaker 1985, pp. 746 and 749–753; Brubaker 1993, pp. 221 and 227; Calhoun 1995b, pp. 133 and 144–145; Cicourel 1993, pp. 94 and 98–99; Codd 1990, p. 134; Corcuff 1996, pp. 28 and 30; de Fornel 2003, p. 221; Dewerpe 2000 [1996], pp. 56–57; Dortier 2002b, p. 57; Ebrecht 2002, p. 230; Evens 1999, pp. 8–9; Fabiani 1999, p. 76; Griller 2000 [1996], pp. 187–188; Heilbron 1999, p. 298; Héran 2000 [1987], pp. 4, 10, and 17–18; Jenkins 1992, p. 66; Joignant 2000, p. 188; Lahire 1999a, p. 17; Ledeneva 1994, pp. 4–5 and 24; Lewandowski 2000, p. 50; Liénard



and Servais 2000 [1979], pp. 84 and 89; Margolis 1999, p. 65; Mouzelis 2000; Panayotopoulos 1999, p. 328; Pinto 1998, pp. 26, 55–56, and 151; Rodríguez López 2002, p. 41; Schatzki 2000 [1987], pp. 297–299; Swartz 1997, pp. 53–55; Vandenberghe 1999, p. 48; Vázquez García 1999, pp. 196–197; Vázquez García 2002, p. 189; Wacquant 1992a; Wacquant 2002, p. 37; Wacquant 2003a, p. 478; Webb, Schirato and Danaher 2002, p. 58.

6. For an excellent overview and discussion, see Brubaker 1985, esp. pp. 746 and 749–753.

7. Bourdieu 1977 [1972], p. 72 (*italics in original*).

8. See *ibid.*, pp. 1 and 29.

9. Bourdieu 1990 [1980], p. 108 (*italics added*).

10. Brubaker 1985, p. 750.

11. Pearsall 1998, p. 1852 (*italics added*). It should be noted, however, that Bourdieu normally uses the term ‘substantialist’ to refer to an ‘essentialist’ or even ‘biologistic’, as opposed to ‘sociological’ or ‘relational’, view of the social. Reflexive sociology seeks to examine not the substances *in themselves*, but the ways in which these substances are *relationally* interconnected. See Bourdieu 1980a, p. 11: ‘[...] le mode de pensée *relationnel* qui, rompant avec le mode de pensée substantialiste, conduit à caractériser tout élément par les relations [...]’ (*Italics in original*).

See also Bourdieu 1994a, p. 18: ‘Le mode de pensée substantialiste [...] qui porte à traiter les activités ou les préférences propres [...] comme des propriétés substantielles, inscrites une fois pour toutes dans une sorte d’*essence* biologique [...]’ (*Italics in original*).

I will elucidate the main features of Bourdieu’s *relational view of the social* further below in the argument.

12. Baert 1998a, p. 10.

13. Bourdieu 1990 [1980], p. 26 (*italics added*).

14. See Bourdieu 1993c.

15. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 121.

16. See *ibid.*, p. 123.

17. Bourdieu refers to ‘rational choice theory’ as both ‘rational actor theory’ (for instance, in *The Logic of Practice*) and ‘rational action theory’ (for instance, in *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, *Pascalian Meditations*, and *The Social Structures of the Economy*). On the Bourdieusian critique of this approach, see, for example, Bourdieu 2005 [2000], esp. pp. 1–17 and 209–222.

18. Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron 1968, p. 32 (my translation).

19. Bourdieu 1990 [1980], p. 50.

20. See Habermas 1984 [1976]-a, p. 1.

21. It should be noted that Bourdieu rejects both *mechanistic* economism (‘mechanical causes’) and *finalist* economism (‘conscious ends’). See Bourdieu 1990 [1980], p. 50:

Finalist economism explains practices by relating them directly and exclusively to economic interests, treated as consciously posited *ends*; mechanistic economism relates them no less directly and exclusively to economic interests, defined just as narrowly but treated as *causes*. Both are unaware that practices can have other principles than mechanical causes or conscious ends and can obey an economic logic without obeying narrowly economic interests. There is an *economy of practices*, a reason immanent in practices, whose ‘origin’ lies neither in the ‘decisions’ of reason understood as rational calculation nor in the determinations of mechanisms external to and superior to the agents. (*Italics added*.)

22. See Wacquant 1992a, pp. 7 and 9.

23. Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron 1968, p. 30 (my translation).

24. Bourdieu 1980a, p. 233 (my translation); original text in French: ‘[...] la science sociale ne peut “traiter les faits sociaux comme des choses” [...]’ In the English edition ‘faits sociaux’

are translated as 'social realities', rather than 'social facts'. See Bourdieu 1990 [1980], p. 135.

25. Wacquant 1992a, p. 7.
26. Bourdieu 1982f, p. 61 (my translation) (already referred to above).
27. Cf. Liénard and Servais 2000 [1979], p. 85.
28. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, p. 113.
29. Vandenberghe 1999, p. 42.
30. Bourdieu 1980a, p. 45 (my translation).
31. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, p. 113. Cf. Vandenberghe 1999, p. 42:

The resistance that the science of sociology rouses when it strips *immediate experience* of its gnoseological privilege is inspired by a humanist philosophy of social action that takes the *subject* as the *ultimate ontological reference* without seeing that the *objective* but *invisible* system of the *relations of the relations* between the individuals has 'more reality' than the subjects it binds. (Italics added.)

32. On the notion of the *skholè*, see, for example: Bourdieu 1980a, p. 47; Bourdieu 1994a, pp. 234 and 265; Bourdieu 1995b, p. 115; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 9, 15, 22, 24, 131, and 143; Bourdieu 2001b, p. 15; Ambroise 2004, p. 260; Bonnewitz 1998, p. 37; Herz 1996, p. 237; Singer 1999, esp. pp. 282–284; Weiss 1999, p. 318.

33. Bourdieu 1997a, p. 131 (my translation).
34. See Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 43–244: 'Livre 1—Critique de la Raison Théorique'.
35. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 123.

36. Bourdieu 1990 [1980], p. 39.  
37. *Ibid.*, p. 36 (italics in original).  
38. On 'scholastic theoreticism', see also: Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 64, 66, 68, 75–76, 80, 97–98, 115, and 164–165; Bourdieu 2001c, p. 78.

39. Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 1. Bourdieu draws upon Plato's use of the word *skholè* in the *Theaetetus*, referring to the privileged condition of philosophers, which is characterised by the apparent transcendence of the limits imposed by immediate material necessity.

40. See Adorno 1997 [1970], p. 29: '[...] a realized materialism would at the same time be the abolition of materialism, the abolition of the domination of material interests.'

41. Bourdieu 1990 [1980], p. 27.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

43. On 'scholastic intellectualism', see also: Bourdieu 1980a, p. 49; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 16, 131, and 160; Bourdieu 2005 [2000], p. 209; Bourdieu 2001b, p. 15; Singer 1999, pp. 282–283; Sintomer 1996, p. 93.

44. See Bourdieu 1997a, p. 37.
45. Bourdieu 2000 [1997], pp. 21–22.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

47. On 'scholastic universalism', see also Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 90, 93, 96, 99–100, 113, 143, and 265.

48. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 132.
49. Leneveu 2002, p. 199 (my translation).
50. See Bourdieu 1997a, p. 36.

51. See *ibid.*, p. 81.—It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss this point in more detail. In the ninth chapter of this book, I will develop a more fine-grained analysis of the difficult relationship between Bourdieusian and Habermasian social theory.

52. See *ibid.*, pp. 64, 75, and 97. On 'scholastic rationalism', see also: Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 64, 75, 97, 130, and 265; Ambroise 2004, p. 262.

53. Bourdieu 1997a, p. 143 (my translation); original text in French: '[...] l'illusion de la transcendence d'une raison transhistorique et transpersonnelle [...]'.—In the published English

translation the word 'et,' between the words 'transhistorique' and 'transpersonnelle,' has been replaced by a comma. See Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 120.

54. Literal translation from German into English: 'Intangibility can only be comprehended and attacked [touched upon] by the intangible [untouchable] itself.' [We must be aware of the ambivalent meaning of the word '*angreifen*' in German: translated here as 'to attack,' it literally means 'to touch *upon*.' Hence, we can only 'touch upon' what we can 'attack'.]

55. On 'scholastic transcendentalism,' see also: Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 48–49; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 56, 137, and 141.

56. Bourdieu 1990 [1980], p. 28.

57. Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 12.

58. On 'scholastic purism,' see also: Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 31, 88, and 97; Bourdieu 1997b, p. 15; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 78 and 91; Dortier 2002a, esp. p. 4.

59. Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 93 (italics added).

60. Bourdieu 1999, pp. 334–335 (italics added).

61. Bourdieu 2001c, p. 16 (my translation).

62. See, for example: Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 133, 136–139, 144, and 149; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 108, 141–142, 155, and 158–160; Bourdieu 2002b, p. 353; Dortier 2002b, p. 55; Eickelpasch 2002, p. 59; Hanks 1993, p. 143; Pinto 1998, p. 206; Sintomer 1996, pp. 93–98; Vázquez García 1999, p. 211; Wacquant 1992e, p. 47; Wacquant 1999, p. 276.

63. Bourdieu 1999, p. 338.

64. On 'scholastic foundationalism,' see also: Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 136–137, 139, 144–145, and 149; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 8, 108, and 160; Wacquant 1992e, p. 47.

65. Literal translation from German into English: 'value-freeness'.

66. Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 224.

67. On 'scholastic neutralism,' see also: Bourdieu 1976a, p. 90; Bourdieu 1982a, p. 15; Bourdieu 1982c, p. 9; Bourdieu 1982d, p. 18; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-c, p. 53; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-d, p. 58; Bourdieu 1997a, p. 136; Bourdieu 2001b, p. 33; Bourdieu 2001c, p. 91; Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron 1968, p. 69; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, p. 71; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992e, p. 141.

68. Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 25 (italics added).

69. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

71. On 'scholastic autonomism,' see also: Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 30, 36, 39, 64, and 116; Pels 1995, esp. pp. 81–83.

72. Bourdieu 1999, p. 335.

73. Literal translation from German into English: 'universal validity'.

74. Literal translation from German into English: 'universal sociability'.

75. Bourdieu 1997a, p. 42 (my translation).

76. On 'scholastic hegemonism,' see also: Bourdieu 1975, p. 4; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 10, 36, 39, and 125; Hacking 2004, esp. pp. 147–148; Wacquant 1999, p. 275; Wacquant 2003b, esp. pp. 61–62 and 65.

## Chapter 7

### The Paradigm Shift of Reflexive Sociology

The paradigm shift from scholastic thought to reflexive-sociological thinking is motivated by the ambition to propose a non-dualistic, praxeological approach to the social. After examining both its epistemological presuppositions and its theoretical criticisms of objectivist, subjectivist, and scholastic thought in the previous two chapters, this chapter presents reflexive sociology's alternative approach to the social. Far from pretending to embrace the entire complexity of the Bourdieusian project, the analysis deliberately focuses on the two conceptual cornerstones of Bourdieusian thought: the field and the habitus. By demonstrating that field and habitus share a considerable amount of constitutive features, this chapter will argue that the structural commonalities between field and habitus are symptomatic of their dialectical interpenetration and, consequently, of the transcendence of the antinomy between objectivism and subjectivism.

#### ***i) The Reconstruction of Objectivity: The Field***

The Bourdieusian reconstruction of objectivity is complex and multifaceted. Yet, the cornerstone of this reformulation is the concept of the

*field*. Its importance for the Bourdieusian conception of the social can hardly be overemphasised, since it is regarded as the ontological 'base' of social objectivity. The following section elucidates the concept of the field, explaining its main features and thereby demonstrating its overall importance for the Bourdieusian conception of the social.

*(1) The Objectivity of the Field*

The field constitutes a form of social objectivity. As such, it forms part of the agents' social environment. Since 'objectivity is a social product of the field'<sup>1</sup>, the latter represents the ontological 'base' of the former. Insofar as the field is a conglomerate of interrelated individuals, it represents the subjectivised nature of social objectivity. Hence, the first step towards overcoming the antinomy between objectivism and subjectivism is to recognise that the field is composed of objectively interrelated subjects.<sup>2</sup>

*(2) The Spatiality of the Field*

The field constitutes a spatio-specific form of objectivity. As a microcosm within the macrocosm, it represents a locus within the social universe, a partiality within the totality of the social space. Insofar as every social action can only take place within the social space and insofar as the constitution of the social space is based on fields, the agents are constrained by their field-specific situatedness in society. The boundaries defined by the field are boundaries that are imposed upon the field-dependent agents. Thus, the field is a social microcosm which spatially delimits subjects' situated actions in the social macrocosm.<sup>3</sup>

*(3) The Temporality of the Field*

The field constitutes a temporally contingent form of objectivity, for its constitution is essentially dynamic and malleable. Every field is produced by history but also produces history. It is both relatively durable and relatively open. Its relative durability indicates its continuous and systemic nature; its relative openness is a sign of its changing and developmental nature. Inasmuch as the social macrocosm is in a constant mode of flux, the field, as a microcosm within the macrocosm, also permanently alters its structural constitution. The field is marked by the intrinsic historicity of being.<sup>4</sup>

*(4) The Practicality of the Field*

The field constitutes a practical form of social objectivity. There is no social field without interrelated social practices. Every field is composed of interrelated social practices whilst at the same time forming the arena in which interrelated social practices take place. The field's fundamentally practical nature describes every field's commonality with and difference from the rest of the social universe: every field shares its fundamentally practical nature with the rest of the social universe, and every field distinguishes itself through the specificity of its practices from the rest of the social universe. The practical universality of the field reflects the practical constitution of social objectivity; the practical specificity of the field reveals its irreducibility to other field-specific forms of social praxis. Through their field-specific immersion in the social universe, subjects are both enabled and compelled to interact in accordance with the practical imperatives of the fields in which they find themselves situated. In essence, the field is a social arena composed of specific human practices.<sup>5</sup>

*(5) The Constructability of the Field*

The field constitutes a socially constructed form of objectivity. It represents an 'arbitrary and artificial social construction'<sup>6</sup>. Since every field is both a socially constructed and a socially constructing form of objectivity, it reflects the dialectical nature of the social. The dialectical constructability of the field contradicts the artificial antinomy between objectivism and subjectivism. Hence, the field is both constructed by the agents and constructs these agents in return. To the extent that social reality can, by definition, always be reconstructed, it is always relatively arbitrary: what can be reconstructed can be changed. Far from simply constituting a natural given, the field is permeated by the constructability of social objectivity.<sup>7</sup>

*(6) The Relationality of the Field*

The field constitutes a microcosm of socially constructed relations. It can be defined as a socially constructed network of interrelated structures. Its relational nature is indicative of our existential dependence upon social relations, that is, our ineluctable dependence upon one another: to 'think in terms of field is to *think relationally*'.<sup>8</sup> Insofar as we are

obliged to relate to other subjects, we are obliged to relate to our social environment. The relational nature of social existence demonstrates the absurdity of the objectivist-subjectivist antinomy: to recognise that the subject depends on other subjects is to recognise that the subject depends on the social objectivity by which it is surrounded, for there is no subjectivity without the subject's immersion in social objectivity. By definition, subjects are condemned to be social subjects. Their subjective constitution is constrained by the ways in which they are objectively related to one another. The field is nothing but a conglomerate of objectively interrelated subjects.<sup>9</sup>

*(7) The Plurality of the Field*

Since every field constitutes a particular structural configuration of the social space, it represents the plurality of particularities within the social universe. Its multiplicity manifests itself in the diversified coexistence of different fields: the economic field, the political field, the cultural field, the linguistic field, the artistic field, the religious field, or the scientific field—to mention only a few. The pluralisation of fields reflects the general tendency towards increasing structural differentiation and complexification in modern society. Recognising the diversified configurational nature of the social, a field-theoretic approach precludes any illusions about the possible reducibility of the social to only one constitutive element. The variegated nature of the social, which is reflected in the plurality of fields, does not allow for the reduction of the social to a monolithically constituted totality. Contradicting any form of monocausalist reductionism, the plurality of coexisting fields reflects the polycentric nature of the social.<sup>10</sup>

*(8) The Potentiality of the Field*

The field constitutes a social structure of potentiality. (a) The potentiality of the field describes its inherent openness. 'Every field constitutes a potentially open space of play whose boundaries are dynamic borders'<sup>11</sup>. Hence, no matter how powerful the structures of a field may be, as social structures, they always contain the potential of being restructured. Their potentiality is a symptom of their intrinsic constructability: what can be socially constructed can also be socially deconstructed and reconstructed. (b) The potentiality *within* the field is captured in the

notion of the *espace des possibles*, that is, literally translated, the 'space of possibles'.<sup>12</sup> The field is a space of possibles. The former defines the boundaries of the latter, thereby structurally delimiting our actions. The potentiality inscribed in every field (*Feldpotential*) defines the subject's potential to act within and upon the world (*Handlungspotential*). In short, every field possesses both a processual and a delimitative potentiality.<sup>13</sup>

(9) *The Functionality of the Field*

The field constitutes an ensemble of functionally related social structures. A functional view of the social reflects 'the introduction into the social sciences of the structural method or, more simply, of the relational mode of thought which [...] leads one to characterize each element by the relationships which unite it with all the others in a system and from which it derives its meaning and function.'<sup>14</sup> (a) Field-immanent functionality implies that every field possesses an *internal* 'logic of functioning'<sup>15</sup>. Yet, the 'tacit laws of functioning of the field'<sup>16</sup> are not directly perceivable by the field-immersed agents. (b) Field-transcendent functionality implies that every field possesses an *external* function, referring to the wider function of a field in relation to society as a whole. In other words, the function of a field needs to be understood in relation to the totality of the social. In short, every field possesses both an internal and an external functionality.<sup>17</sup>

(10) *The Indeterminacy of the Field*

Indeterminacy manifests itself in the relative unpredictability of the ways in which fields develop. Unpredictability makes the social-scientific study of fields even more challenging, as their discontinuous developments illustrate their inherent complexity. Contrary to a merely functionalist systems-theoretic interpretation, however, it is not only their *systemic*, but also their *human* nature which makes fields tremendously complex, volatile, and unpredictable. Fields are subject to 'endless change'<sup>18</sup>. As social constructs, fields represent structural configurations of human interrelationality. Human agency is a praxeological precondition for the very existence of a field, since the latter would cease to exist in absence of the former. The subject carries both the weight and the relief of human agency. Ultimately, only the unpredictable power of



human agency explains why even the most rigid and repressive field will never succeed in annihilating its inherent indeterminacy.<sup>19</sup>

(11) *The Determinacy of the Field*

The field constitutes a social structure which is at the same time relatively determined and relatively determining, both internally and externally. (a) Field-immanent determinacy describes the *internal* functioning of the field. The reproduction of a field is driven by its underlying ‘invariant laws of functioning’<sup>20</sup>. The identification of its structural driving forces allows the social scientist to uncover the relative determinacy of every field. (b) Field-transcendent determinacy is due to the *external* constraints imposed upon a field from the outside. Every field is ‘subjugated to social laws, [...] it never completely escapes from the constraints of the macrocosm’<sup>21</sup>. The macrocosm, society, imposes its relative determinacy upon its microcosms, fields. The more powerful a particular field, the greater is its capacity to determine the nature of other fields and society. The less powerful a particular field, the greater are its chances to be determined by other fields and society. In short, every field possesses both an internal and an external determinacy.<sup>22</sup>

(12) *The Autonomy of the Field*

The field is a relatively autonomous microcosm within the social macrocosm. As a microcosm, every field possesses its specific legality (*légalité spécifique*, or *Eigengesetzlichkeit*), through which it distinguishes itself from the general legality (*légalité générale*, or *Allgemeingesetzlichkeit*) of the social universe.<sup>23</sup> Yet, a social microcosm can never completely transcend, but only challenge its dependence on the social macrocosm. ‘The degree of autonomy of a field has as a main indicator its power of refraction, of retranslation.’<sup>24</sup> Hence, the greater the capacity of a field to bypass the generality (*légalité générale*) of the social universe, the more autonomy (*légalité spécifique*) it can claim to possess. The more complex a specific formation of society, the more field-based forms of autonomy it contains. This is particularly evident in the modern world, because one of its key features is its continuous social differentiation and complexification. Be it in the economic field (‘business is business’), the

artistic field ('art for the sake of art'), the judicial field ('justice for the sake of justice'), or the scientific field ('truth for the sake of truth')<sup>25</sup>—the relative autonomy of fields is founded on their capacity to function in accordance with their own laws.<sup>26</sup>

(13) *The Heteronomy of the Field*

The field is also a relatively heteronymous microcosm within the social macrocosm. Its heteronomy is twofold: first, it can simply refer to the dependence *between* two or more fields; and, second, it can also refer to the dependence of one field *upon* another field or many other fields. Either way, field-heteronomy reveals a significant feature of fields: their general interpenetrability. Fields are never completely, but always only relatively autonomous, since they always exist in relation to one another and can, potentially, always be permeated by one another. Their interrelationality indicates their relative interdependence. Relative heteronomy exists whenever one field depends partly on another field or on many other fields. Complete heteronomy exists whenever one field depends entirely on another field or on many other fields. The first scenario applies to every field. The second scenario applies to the power of one field—notably the economic field—to colonise other fields, leading to the latter's dependence upon the former. In this case, the *légalité spécifique* of one field can be overpowered by the *légalité spécifique* of another field, thereby converting its relative autonomy into heteronomy. Insofar as fields are always interdependent and interpenetrable, they are always relatively heteronymous.<sup>27</sup>

(14) *The Contestability of the Field*

The potentiality and the indeterminacy of the field are expressed in its intrinsic contestability. Luhmannean systems theory and Bourdieusian field theory can be distinguished not only in terms of the conceptual difference between system and field, but also, more fundamentally, in terms of their diverging conceptions of the social, in which both system and field are structurally embedded. Systems theory tends to regard the social as a conglomeration of self-referential, self-organised, and self-sufficient systems, each of which *functions* like a mechanical apparatus according to its own logic.<sup>28</sup> Field theory, by contrast, regards the social as a universe of fields which are not only relatively independent

and interdependent at the same time, but whose very constitution is constantly at stake. 'There is history only as long as people revolt, resist, act.'<sup>29</sup> Thus, it is not only the contestability of fields in particular, but also the contestability of the social universe in general which makes the most rigid, repressive, and powerful micro- or macrocosm vulnerable. Fields are both internally and externally contestable.

Internal contestability: (a) Every field is internally divided by *competing social groups*: the dominating groups, on the one hand, and the dominated groups, on the other. (b) These social groups are situated in hierarchically structured *social positions*. There are both dominant and dominated positions in each field. (c) These positions are an empirical manifestation of the *unequal distribution of capital* in each field. The struggle between the dominant and the dominated groups in each field is a struggle over the appropriation of capital specific to each field. The acquisition of legitimate capital equals the acquisition of legitimate power. (d) The unequal distribution of capital is determined by the *rappports de force* of each field. Insofar as capital is field-specific<sup>30</sup>, *social interests* are field-dependent and, contrary to an orthodox Marxist view, must not be reduced to economic interests. (e) The structurally embedded field-specific conflict of interests manifests itself in the consolidation of diametrically opposed field-specific *strategies*. Whereas the conservative, 'orthodox' strategies (*orthodoxy* or *doxa*<sup>31</sup>) of the dominant groups aim at the reproduction of the field, the subversive, 'heterodox' strategies (*heterodoxy* or *heresy*<sup>32</sup>) of the dominated groups strive for the transformation of the field.

External contestability: (a) Inasmuch as different forms of society produce different types of fields, different types of fields produce different forms of society. Hence, the relationship between the social microcosms and the social macrocosm is dialectical. (b) Inasmuch as fields are stratified by internal hierarchies, the social macrocosm is divided by internal hierarchies. The hierarchies *within* different fields are accompanied by the hierarchies *between* different fields within the social universe. (c) The weaker and the less autonomous a field, the more likely it is to be influenced, permeated, or even colonised by other fields. The stronger and the more autonomous a field, the more likely it is to shape, penetrate, or even hegemonise other fields. (d) The field-transcendent convertibility of capital is a symptom of

field-transcendent interpenetrability, for it shows how power relations within a microcosm can never be understood in isolation from the power relations between the microcosms. (e) Far from representing an anachronistic view of the social, the external contestability of fields underlines the multidimensional and complex nature of modern societies.<sup>33</sup>

(15) *The Homology of the Field*

The homology of the field reveals both the subject-dependent nature of the object and the object-dependent nature of the subject. Every field produces, and is simultaneously produced by, its own *homological superstructurality*. 'To each of the fields there corresponds a fundamental point of view on the world which *creates* its own object'<sup>34</sup>. Thus, each field generates a field-specific view of the world (*Feldanschauung*). Drawing upon the Marxian metaphor of base and superstructure, each field-specific base possesses its own field-specific superstructure. Three main similarities and three main differences between the Marxian and the Bourdieusian conception of 'homological superstructurality' can be identified.

Their similarities: (a) Both accounts assume that there is a homological relationship between the constitution of objectivity and the constitution of subjectivity (*homological superstructurality*). (b) Both accounts presume that this homological correspondence is driven by the functional imperatives of some underlying structural mechanisms of social objectivity (*homological functionality*). (c) Both accounts suggest that the homological and functional relationship between subject and object produces an interest-driven and therefore distorted perception of objectivity (*homological distortedness*).

Their differences: (a) Whereas the Marxian model of base and superstructure seeks to capture the relationship between the material and the ideological in terms of society as a whole, the Bourdieusian notion of homology seeks to encapsulate the relationship between the material and the symbolic in terms of diverging fields (*homological macrocosm versus homological microcosms*). (b) Whereas the Marxian model of base and superstructure tends to interpret the ideological superstructure as an epiphenomenal product of the economic base only, the Bourdieusian notion of homology refers to a plurality of different

fields: there is a plurality of different field-specific 'bases' with a plurality of different field-specific 'superstructures' (*homological monism versus homological pluralism*). (c) Whereas the Marxian model of base and superstructure conceives of ideology as 'false consciousness' and therefore as a primarily cognitive deformation of subjects' perception of the world, the Bourdieusian notion of homology is far more complex in that it accounts for subjects' bodily dispositions required for the reproduction of a field (*homological cognitivism versus homological corporealism*). Rather than relying on the Marxian notion of superstructurality, which remains trapped in the philosophy of consciousness, the Bourdieusian conception of homology suggests that there is an ontological correspondence between actors' social positions and actors' corporeal dispositions: a homology between their situatedness and their ability to cope with the situation, between the field-specific game and their field-specific ability to play the game.<sup>35</sup>

In order to understand the complexity of this homology, we need to examine the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity in more detail. Hence, after elucidating the main features of the Bourdieusian conception of objectivity, which is based on the notion of the field, we need to explore the key characteristics of the Bourdieusian conception of subjectivity, which is based on the notion of the habitus.

## **ii) The Reconstruction of Subjectivity: The Habitus**

The Bourdieusian reconstruction of subjectivity is just as complex and multifaceted as the Bourdieusian reconstruction of objectivity. In order to transcend the division between objectivist and subjectivist thought, we need to recognise that the social is founded on both the object *and* the subject. Thus, the reconstruction of objectivity goes hand in hand with the reconstruction of subjectivity. The Bourdieusian reconstruction of subjectivity is based on the concept of the *habitus*. The following section examines the concept of the habitus, analysing its main features and demonstrating that the constitutive properties of the habitus are largely congruent with the constitutive properties of the field. Hence, the concept of the habitus can only be understood in relation to, rather than separately from, the concept of the field.

(1) *The Subjectivity of the Habitus*

The habitus captures the intrinsically social character of human subjectivity. In order to overcome the subject–object division, the individual needs to be understood as a social individual. Inasmuch as social objectivity is made up of an ensemble of subjectivities, subjectivity itself is permeated by social objectivity. The habitus is the subject-located outcome of this dialectical relationship between society and individual; it is ‘socialized subjectivity’<sup>36</sup>. If the field represents a social form of subjectivised objectivity, created by the relations between subjects, the habitus constitutes a social form of objectivised subjectivity, permeated by the social objectivity that surrounds subjects. The habitus is nothing but the subjective rearticulation of the objective. In other words, it is both the ‘internalisation of externality’ and the ‘externalisation of internality’<sup>37</sup>: the habitus is through the social and the social is through the habitus. Subjectivity is both object-created and object-creating. In essence, the habitus is socialised and socialising subjectivity.<sup>38</sup>

(2) *The Spatiality of the Habitus*

The habitus is located in the human body. The bodily nature of the habitus is an expression of the bodily nature of social action. Just as the emphasis upon the social character of the habitus seeks to transcend the subject–object dualism, the insistence upon the bodily nature of the habitus seeks to transcend the scholastic mind–body dualism.<sup>39</sup> Thus, consciousness does not represent a transcendental capacity independent of, separable from, or existent beyond the human body. On the contrary, consciousness is embedded in the human body. Far from representing the ontological cornerstone of subjectivity, consciousness is only one, albeit an important, facet of the corporeally constituted habitus.

To move from the imagined preponderance of consciousness to the actual preponderance of the body has three major implications: (a) the transcendence of the *subject–object dualism*, because the multifaceted complexity of social objectivity is literally embodied in the multifaceted complexity of human subjectivity; (b) the transcendence of the *mind–body dualism*, for consciousness is embedded in the body, representing an integral, but not necessarily the most significant, component of human subjectivity; and (c) the transcendence of the *nature–society*

*dualism*, since the constitution of the social world leaves its mark on the constitution of our bodies. In other words, the subject is in the object and the object is in the subject; consciousness is in the body and the body is in consciousness; and '[t]he body is in the social world'<sup>40</sup> and 'the social world is in the body'<sup>41</sup>. The objective order is essentially the order of corporeal subjects; the mental order is unavoidably a bodily order; and 'the social order is merely the order of bodies'<sup>42</sup>.

The bodily dispositions of subjects are social through and through: the incorporation of the social is nothing but the socialisation of the body. The tremendous power of the habitus is derived from a paradox: the socialisation of the natural leads to the naturalisation of the social. What is embodied is naturalised, since nothing seems more natural to us than what is inscribed in our bodies. Even the seemingly most personal, most subjective, and most intimate facets of human existence are thoroughgoingly social, representing a form of collective intimacy. Its incorporated implicitness, however, is the secret of its apparent naturalness. Incorporated society is naturalised society. Our experience of the world is only thinkable in terms of a bodily experience. The habitus is corporeal subjectivity.<sup>43</sup>

### (3) *The Temporality of the Habitus*

The temporality of the habitus is expressed in its dynamic but durable nature. 'Being the product of history, it is an *open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences [...]. It is durable but not eternal!'<sup>44</sup> The habitus is just as dynamic and malleable as the field. Since the former articulates itself always in relation to the latter, the adaptability of the habitus is an indispensable precondition for the successful reproduction of fields. The habitus embodies the intrinsic historicity of being.<sup>45</sup>

### (4) *The Practicality of the Habitus*

The habitus represents the fundamentally practical constitution of the subject, its *sens pratique*.<sup>46</sup> As such, it describes our ability to cope with our inevitable immersion in social praxis. Our immersion in the world is the precondition for our understanding of the world. Before we can make sense of the world, we need to be situated in the world. Insofar as our situatedness *in* the social world is subject to the practical con-

straints of the social world, we need to be equipped with the ability to cope with these constraints. The specificity of our existential withinness is reflected in 'the specificity of practical knowledge'<sup>47</sup>: in our daily lives, we deal with the implicitness of our existence. Our being-there (*Dasein*) is a being-within (*Darinsein*); we are able to act upon the world insofar as we know how to act within it. In essence, our habitus is a know-how, rather than a know-that. Social interaction cannot be divorced from practical knowledge; by contrast, theoretical knowledge is not only dispensable, but it can even obstruct the natural fluidity of social interaction. Habitus is uncomprehended comprehension: we comprehend without really comprehending. The more implicit and the less conscious, the less unstable and the more powerful our immersion in the world turns out to be. The habitus equips the subject with the socio-practical competence to be immersed in and cope with the world. Our habitus renders us capable of action.<sup>48</sup>

*(5) The Constructability of the Habitus*

The habitus constitutes both a socially constructed and a socially constructing form of subjectivity. It is 'this capacity to construct social reality, itself socially constructed'<sup>49</sup>. The dialectical nature of the habitus is significant as it reveals the dialectical nature of the social itself, which forcefully undermines the artificial subject-object antinomy. The habitus is both constructed and constructing, structured and structuring, created and creating. It is both *Gemachtheit* (madeness) and *Macht* (power): the subject's faculty to be constructed and the subject's power to construct. The subject becomes a subject by creating itself through the creation of the social world, and society becomes society by creating itself through the creation of subjects. Just as there is no construction of the subject without the construction of society, there is no construction of society without the construction of the subject. The habitus allows for the dialectical interpenetration of subject and object, enabling us to construct the world whilst being constructed by it.<sup>50</sup>

*(6) The Relationality of the Habitus*

The habitus is both a producer and a product of relationality. As a producer of relationality, it makes the subject's relation with other subjects possible. As a product of relationality, it is precisely this relation-



ship with other subjects which brings the habitus into being. In other words, the habitus is a relationally generated generator of relationality. As coexistential beings, we are correlational entities: we exist inevitably in relation to one another, no matter how implicit, hidden, or unconscious our interrelationality may be. The habitus is a mediator of the structural interdependence of subjects, since it constitutes a storage of socially acquired capacities through which the subject is able to relate to its social environment.

The triviality of relationality should not disguise its very fundamentality: we relate (*beziehen*) to the world by absorbing (*anziehen*) it and are thereby compelled to accept the world's power to educate (*erziehen*) us. Our relation to the world (*Weltbezug*) is the precondition for our relation to ourselves (*Selbstbezug*). Only by embracing the world (*Weltannahme*) can we embrace ourselves (*Selbstannahme*). A subject that fails to relate to the world, a relationless subject, is an alienated subject. The common phrase 'I cannot relate to this'<sup>51</sup> reflects the common experience of finding oneself unable to relate to a particular part of social reality. In a state of complete relationlessness, the social world would cease to exist. The relation-dependent subject itself would wither away. The thought experiment of a human world without social relations cannot replace the reality of our existential dependence on social relations.

The habitus contradicts the counterfactual vacuum of relationlessness and reaffirms the factual plenitude of our relational dependence. It stands for our 'immediate relationship of involvement'<sup>52</sup> in the world, our authentic *pre-occupation*<sup>53</sup> with the world. 'The relation to the world is a relation of presence in the world, of being in the world, in the sense of belonging to the world, being possessed by it'<sup>54</sup>. As a relational capacity, the habitus reveals that human life is relation-related (*bezugsbezogen*): relations 'between ourselves' are so significant that they are 'in themselves' fundamentally important to us. The social subject is relational in-itself. *That* we have relationships is existentially more important than *what kind* of relationships we have, as relational existence presupposes relational idiosyncrasy. In essence, the habitus describes our capacity to relate to the world. The habitus is a relational capacity.<sup>55</sup>

(7) *The Plurality of the Habitus*

The habitus is a pluralised configuration of the social. Its plurality is twofold in that the plurality *of* the habitus goes hand in hand with the plurality *within* the habitus. (a) The plurality *of* the habitus is a direct reflection of the plurality of different fields. To each particular field belongs a particular habitus, since every particular game requires a particular sense of the game, ensuring that the game can be played in the first place. Hence, the more different types of fields there are, the more different types of *intersubjectively* produced habituses there are. (b) The plurality *within* the habitus refers to the pluralisation of subjectivity itself. To each particular subject belongs a plurality of different forms of habitus, since every particular subject requires a pluralised sense of the selves that it possesses within itself, ensuring that subjectivity can develop in the first place. Thus, the more different types of subjectivities there are within the subject, the more different types of *intrasubjectively* produced habituses there are. Therefore, the structural differentiation and complexification of the modern world does not only permeate, but also pluralises the subjectivity of the subject. Every subject possesses a multiplicity of context-dependent, sometimes complementary and sometimes contradictory, forms of habitus. The habitus is a pluralised form of subjectivity.<sup>56</sup>

(8) *The Potentiality of the Habitus*

The habitus is a subjectively assimilated system of potentiality. Its potentiality is threefold insofar as subjects are simultaneously driven by (a) the potentiality *of* the habitus, (b) the potentiality *within* the habitus, and (c) the potentiality *beyond* the habitus.

(a) Processual Potentiality: The potentiality *of* the habitus is due to its inherent processual openness. Hence, the habitus is more adequately understood as habituation because it is constantly changing. Its ontological fluidity derives directly from the ontological fluidity of its social environment: as our social environment changes over time and in different contexts, our habitus changes correspondingly, thereby making the situated just as contingent as the situation itself.

(b) Delimitative Potentiality: The potentiality *within* the habitus refers to the delimitative—that is, both delimiting and delimited—

nature of the habitus in terms of capacity: habitus is our *capacité des possibles*, our 'capacity of possibles'. This means that our habitus defines what is possible within the limits of our personal competences, which need to be constantly reshaped in order to stand up to the structural demands directed at us by our social environment. Seeking to cope with the constant pressures from the outside world, 'the agent does what is in his power to make possible the actualization of the potentialities inscribed in his body in the form of capacities and dispositions shaped by conditions of existence.'<sup>57</sup> The habitus is our power to act within and upon the world; the potentiality inscribed in every habitus (*Habituspotential*) defines the subject's potential to act within and upon the world (*Handlungspotential*).

(c) Projective Potentiality: The potentiality *beyond* the habitus reveals its deeply paradoxical nature: the habitus seeks to be what it is and what it is not at the same time. Put differently, we are what we are and what we could be. This ambivalent potentiality is inscribed in our developmental pace (*Werdegang*): our *raison d'être* is our *pouvoir-être*.<sup>58</sup> Only by *becoming* what and who we are does existence pose a challenge to us. Habitus is the embodiment of our this-sided beyondness, articulating, disarticulating, and rearticulating itself always in relation to the conditions of its situatedness. 'Habitus as a system of dispositions to be and to do is a potentiality, a desire to be which, in a certain way, seeks to *create* the conditions of its fulfilment, and therefore to *create* the conditions most favourable to what it is.'<sup>59</sup> In other words, the habitus needs to realise the potentiality of its social environment in order to potentialise itself. After being thrown into the world, the habitus enables us to throw ourselves back into the world.<sup>60</sup>

#### (9) The Functionality of the Habitus

The functionality of the habitus is twofold in that it is both functionally organised and functionally embedded. (a) Habitus-immanent functionality refers to the internal functional logic of every habitus, its subjective function. The functioning of every agent's habitus remains largely unnoticed by the habitus-producing subjects. The underlying nature of the habitus is so smoothly reproduced by the subjects because of their unconscious willingness to subscribe to its internal functional logic. (b) Habitus-transcendent functionality stands for the external functional

attachment of every habitus, its social function. Every habitus 'is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions'<sup>61</sup>. More concretely, every habitus fulfils a practical function in relation to society in general and in relation to a specific field in particular. This transsubjective, environment-oriented functioning of the habitus works just as tacitly as its intrasubjective, agent-oriented functioning. The main functional task of a specific habitus is the reproduction of a specific field. Functioning fields would be unthinkable without correspondingly functioning habituses. 'Thus the functioning of the system presupposes the orchestration of habitus'<sup>62</sup>; only if the habitus functions in accordance with the imperative needs of a field can the functioning of field and habitus be guaranteed.<sup>63</sup>

*(10) The Indeterminacy of the Habitus*

The indeterminacy of the habitus is due to the indeterminacy of the subject's existence. The paradoxical nature of the habitus as a simultaneously determined and determining set of structures reflects the paradoxical nature of power: the habitus is the most hated ally and the most beloved enemy of power. As an object-empowering force it is needed for the determinacy of reproductive immanence; as a subject-empowering force it is needed for the indeterminacy of reconstructive transcendence. To assume that 'the habitus contributes to determine by what it is determined'<sup>64</sup> is to suggest that 'social agents are determined only to the extent that they determine themselves'<sup>65</sup>. Objectivity's power to determine our subjectivity is dependent upon subjectivity's power to determine objectivity. Transcending the subject-object dualism, the habitus is the mediator between subject and object: it is ally and enemy of both of them. As an ally of the subject, it faithfully reproduces its subjectivity; as its enemy, it creatively rearticulates it. As an ally of the object, it docilely assimilates its objectivity; as its enemy, it subversively outgrows it. The relative indeterminacy of society ultimately stems from our capacity to determine our determinacy. Habitus is not only a structured, but also a structuring apparatus; it constitutes a 'generative (if not creative) capacity inscribed in the system of dispositions'<sup>66</sup>; it is a creation created by the creators themselves. In brief, the indeterminacy of the habitus derives from its relative power to shape its own existence.<sup>67</sup>

(11) *The Determinacy of the Habitus*

The determinacy of the habitus is rooted in the systematic and schematic nature of the habitus as well as in its structural dependence upon the social environment. Thus, two forms of habitus-determinacy are to be distinguished.

(a) Habitus-immanent determinacy refers to the relatively regular nature of the habitus. The habitus constitutes a subjectively internalised system of collectively constructed schemes of perception, appreciation, and action.<sup>68</sup> This means that how we perceive, appreciate, and act within the world depends largely on the pre-structured habitual matrix located in our bodies. Even when we believe to confront the world in the most original and unique ways, we cannot escape our dependence upon the determining power of previously acquired bodily schemes, which allow us to make sense of the world in the first place. Through our experiences we create provinces of meaning (*Sinnprovinzen*), which give sense to these experiences. Our unavoidable reliance upon our routine-driven background horizons embodied in the habitus converts even consciousness into a form of unconscious: before we confront the world, the world has already confronted us. Whatever we contribute to the world, we contribute through what has already been contributed to us. We are determined to be determined by our internal *Sinnprovinzen*.

(b) Habitus-transcendent determinacy is intimately interrelated with its immanent determinacy since the latter is a product of the former. As social entities, we depend on one another. The habitus is the endogenous expression of our exogenous determinacy. Habitus-transcendent determinacy depends on subjects' determination by their environment. More specifically, our internal *Sinnprovinzen* are derived from our external *Lebensprovinzen*. Our being-there is a being-within: the world is within us and we are within the world. The habitus is the existential mediator between the world and the subject. The positionally structured body of society determines the dispositionally structured body of the subject. We are determined to be determined by our external *Lebensprovinzen*.<sup>69</sup>

(12) *The Autonomy of the Habitus*

The relative autonomy of every habitus is based on (a) its irreducibility, (b) its coexistentiality, and (c) its subjectivity.

(a) Every habitus is relatively autonomous in the sense that no habitus can be reduced to any other habitus. A habitus can be class-based, gender-based, ethnicity-based, age-based, ability-based, or religion-based, to mention only a few possible variations. None of these field-specific determinants can be reduced to any other one.

(b) Every habitus is relatively autonomous in the sense that it necessarily coexists with other forms of habitus, both on the intrasubjective and on the intersubjective level. Not only can no habitus be reduced to any other habitus; furthermore, no habitus can be understood in isolation from other habituses. For every subject is *always simultaneously* constrained by a whole variety of sociological determinants, no matter how much the weight of each individual determinant may contextually vary.

(c) Every habitus is relatively autonomous in the sense that it is unavoidably embedded in the subject's subjectivity. The habitus 'is what gives practices their *relative independence* with respect to external determinations of the immediate present.'<sup>70</sup> Every habitus only *tends* to make us behave according to the rules of the game. Yet, it also enables us to circumvent these rules or even to transform the game altogether. As a generative capacity, the habitus implies the subject's relative autonomy to challenge its relative heteronomy.<sup>71</sup>

### (13) *The Heteronomy of the Habitus*

The heteronomy of the habitus derives from its dependence upon its social environment. This dependence is ontological since it belongs to the very nature of the habitus to depend upon the social reality by which it is surrounded and created. Hence, it is the very *raison d'être* of the habitus to mediate between the exogenous constraints imposed upon the subject by the social world and the endogenous needs located in the subject's subjective world. The habitus *is always relatively heteronymous* because its emergence, consolidation, and reproduction are necessarily context-dependent. The habitus *can be completely heteronymous* whenever its ontological context-dependence converts itself into context-dominance. The first scenario describes the universal condition of the habitus. The second scenario describes the particular situation in which the habitus is completely hegemonised by an exogenous social imperative. Complete heteronomy can be transient and ephem-

eral, occurring in crucial moments in which the subject is seized by the predominance of particular, notably power-oriented, field imperatives. Complete heteronomy can also be structural and permanent, however, particularly in relations of social domination in which the subject's total submission to a particular form of habitus is the precondition for the successful reproduction of power relations. Either way, the heteronomy of the habitus reflects the universal penetrability of the subject by the object. As ontologically social subjects, we are potentially docile objects, prepared to subjugate ourselves to conformity with the structural imperatives imposed upon us by our social environment. The habitus, in this sense, is the accomplice of its own condition.<sup>72</sup>

*(14) The Contestability of the Habitus*

The contestability of the habitus would be nothing without the contestability of the field, and the contestability of the field would be nothing without the contestability of the habitus. To acknowledge that the constitution of the social is constantly at stake means to recognise that social agents struggle not only over the formation of social objectivity, but also over the configuration of their subjectivity. When the social is at stake, *we* are at stake. As the carriers of the social, the subjects themselves have to be contested if the objectivity that they produce is to be fought over. The most powerful social formation is worth nothing unless it succeeds in carrying its power right into the agents' subjectivities. The most efficient and largely unnoticed way of dominating a specific group of people is to colonise their habitus, since the habitus constitutes the Achilles heel of any social order located in the subject. The habitus tells us what to do and how to behave without telling us. The silence of its speech explains the power of its persistence. Nevertheless, the relative subjective autonomy of our habitus allows us to challenge the power of reproductive persistence. What is contestable outside the habitus is contestable through the habitus. The contestability of the habitus epitomises the contestability of the social.<sup>73</sup>

*(15) The Homology of the Habitus*

The homology of the habitus reveals the object-dependent nature of the subject and the subject-dependent nature of the object. The dialectical

relationship between subject and object implies that the habitus can only be understood in relation to the field just as the field can only be understood in relation to the habitus. The relation between habitus and field is characterised by ‘a genuine ontological complicity’<sup>74</sup>: since the habitus is an accomplice of its own condition, it is deeply attached to the objective conditions which have brought the habitus into being. Every field needs to produce its own *corresponding* habitus in order to ensure its objective reproduction, just as much as every habitus needs to reproduce its own *corresponding* field in order to ensure its subjective reproduction.

Let us recall that every field generates a field-specific view of the world (*Feldanschauung*). A field-specific view is located in the very heart of the habitus, illustrating its multifaceted ‘superstructural’ nature. Drawing upon the Marxist metaphor of base and superstructure, every objective ‘base’, the field, possesses its homological ‘superstructure’, the habitus. Field-specific superstructurality manifests itself in the *illusio*, the doxic adherence to the implicit dogmas and fundamental beliefs of a field. ‘*Illusio* is that way of *being in* the world, of being occupied by the world’<sup>75</sup>; it stands for our microcosmic immersion in the macrocosm which makes us see and understand the macrocosm through the presuppositional structure of the microcosm. *Illusio* is field-specific doxa. The *Vorgefundenheit* (prefoundness) of the field makes the field-immersed subjects buy into the *Selbstverständlichkeit* (taken-for-grantedness) of the presuppositions inherent in the field. *Illusio* leads us to believe that the world is nothing and that the game of the field is everything. It makes us believe that the world *is* the field.

The subject’s prereflexive, undiscussed, and quasi-primordial attachment to a field makes *illusio* not less but more powerful. The more immersed the subject, the less aware it is of its immersion. *Illusio* is the subject’s *unbegriffene Inbegriffenheit* (unconscious immersion) in the object, which makes its *Weltzugehörigkeit* (belonging to the world) possible but problematic. The problematic irony of *illusio* consists in its power to convert the subject’s *Feldanschauung* into its *Weltanschauung*. An *illusio*-motivated habitus is the homological precondition for the successful reproduction of a field. It thereby treats field-specific particularity as the motivational universality of its existence. Object and subject are so closely intertwined that their ontological complicity, rather



than their artificial separation, can be regarded as their *raison d'être*. The homological relationship between field and habitus constitutes the ontological foundation of the social.<sup>76</sup>

### **iii) The Reconstruction of the Social: Society and Interrelationality**

The reconstruction of objectivity and the reconstruction of subjectivity are motivated by one common concern: the reconstruction of the social. As shown above, the reconstruction of the social is not achieved by artificially separating the object from the subject, but, on the contrary, by acknowledging their homological intertwinement. The homological interpenetration of field and habitus is universal, but the degree of structural complexity of their dialectical interplay depends on the degree of societal development: premodern and traditional societies tend to produce and require only a fairly limited amount of relatively undifferentiated and largely predictable homologies between field and habitus; by contrast, modern and posttraditional societies tend to produce and require a wide variety of progressively differentiated and less predictable homologies between field and habitus.<sup>77</sup> The less complex the structures of society, the more its reproduction depends upon relatively undifferentiated forms of homology between field and habitus. The more complex the structures of society, the more its reproduction depends upon relatively differentiated forms of homology between field and habitus.

The developmental variability of the homology between field and habitus describes the historical *contingency* of the homological nature of the social. The imperative invariability of the homology between field and habitus—based on their common features, which have been elucidated above—describes the ontological *universality* of the homological nature of the social. In order to clarify the homological view of human coexistence, in the Bourdieusian sense, we need to explain the core meaning of the notion of the social. The social, as it is understood here, can be defined as *the structural outcome of human interrelationality*. Thus, it stands for the universal human condition of structural inbetweenness: anything that is created through the relation between positionally situated subjects can be characterised as social. Accordingly, both field and

habitus are social through and through as they are both created interrelationally. More specifically, it shall be argued here that the Bourdieusian approach allows us to identify five fundamental preconditions for the very possibility of the social: (a) relationality, (b) reciprocity, (c) reconstructability, (d) renormalisability, and (e) recognisability.

(a) *The Relationality of the Social*

The relationality of the social is expressed in the relationality of subjects. To be more precise, it stands for the relationality *between* subjects. To exist as a fundamentally relational subject means to exist *in relation* to other subjects. As social selves, we are relational selves. The fact that we can only relate to ourselves by relating to others reveals our fundamental interdependence. No individual could possibly exist in complete isolation from other individuals. We can only exist in relation to one another. We are, therefore we relate; and we relate, therefore we are. We are 'there' by being 'with' one another. Human *Dasein* is *Miteinandersein*: we have no alternative but to coexist.

To acknowledge that 'the real is relational'<sup>78</sup> means to do justice to the fact that we exist by existing with one another. The relational nature of human existence is so fundamental that it tends to be taken for granted by subjects unless their relationships are threatened by internal or external factors. What we have and depend upon we do not appreciate until we cease to have, but continue to depend upon, it. Insofar as social relationality represents a human need, human relations, independent of the specific value of each of these relations, have a value in themselves.

A non-relational subject is an alienated subject. Irrelational subjectivity is just as absurd as an irrelational society. Irrelational human existence equals the lack of social existence. A state in which relationality is absent is a state of alienation; a state in which relationality is denied is a state of domination. We do not only depend on other subjects but we depend, above all, on the *relations* with other subjects, since it is through the relations with other subjects that we become subjects ourselves. In other words, rather than speculating about the possibility of an isolated subject in-itself, we need to acknowledge the reality of subjects' relations between themselves. The first ontological precondition for the possibility of the social is relationality.<sup>79</sup>

(b) *The Reciprocity of the Social*

The reciprocity of the social is expressed in the reciprocity between subjects. To exist as a fundamentally reciprocal subject means to exist *in reciprocity* with other subjects. As social selves, we are reciprocal selves. The ‘whole logic of practice’<sup>80</sup> is driven by an ‘interlocking of actions and reactions’<sup>81</sup>. The fact that we can develop ourselves by being reciprocated by others reveals that the human condition is a condition of mutuality. We are, therefore we reciprocate; and we reciprocate, therefore we are. We are ‘there’ by being ‘through’ one another. Human *Dasein* is *Durcheinandersein*: we have no alternative but to exist through one another.

The cycle of social interaction is a ‘cycle of reciprocity’<sup>82</sup>: when we act in relation to one another we are socially intertwined because our actions can be potentially reciprocated by others. The Latin word *reciprocus*, referring to the idea of ‘moving backwards and forwards’<sup>83</sup>, indicates the centrality of this social dynamic: we move through life by moving backwards and forwards between ourselves and others. We become who we are by reciprocating others and by being reciprocated by them.

A non-reciprocated subject is an alienated subject. Irreciprocal subjectivity is just as absurd as an irreciprocal society. Irreciprocal human existence is no existence. A state in which reciprocity is absent is a state of alienation; a state in which reciprocity is denied is a state of domination. We do not only depend on other subjects but we depend, above all, on the *reciprocity* with other subjects, since it is through reciprocal interactions with other subjects that we become subjects ourselves. In other words, rather than speculating about the possibility of an irreciprocal subject in-itself, we need to acknowledge the reality of subjects’ reciprocity which they create through one another. The second ontological precondition for the possibility of the social is reciprocity.<sup>84</sup>

(c) *The Reconstructability of the Social*

The reconstructability of the social is expressed in the reconstructability of subjects. To exist as a fundamentally reconstructable subject means to exist in permanent *reconstruction* with other subjects. As social selves, we are reconstructable selves. This is not to suggest that our biographical life experiences can be reversed; on the contrary, ‘there is a *relative irreversibility* to this process’<sup>85</sup>. It does mean, however, that our relations

with others, as well as our relations with ourselves, can be reconstructed. The fact that we can reconstruct our relations with ourselves by reconstructing our relations with others reveals our fundamental changeability, our rearticulability. We are, therefore we reconstruct; and we reconstruct, therefore we are. We are 'there' by being 'beyond' one another. Human *Dasein* is *Jenseitsvoneinandersein*, that is, it is *aufhebbares Sein*: we have no alternative but to exist beyond one another by inventing reality again and again.

Our capacity to rearticulate ourselves reflects society's need for constant recreation. Since the social is 'durable but not eternal'<sup>86</sup>, its structural configuration is in a constant mode of flux. The social is never for ever. The subject's *Aufhebungsfähigkeit*, its capacity to reinvent the social, matches society's *Aufhebungsnotwendigkeit*, its necessity to be reinvented all the time. The human capacity to turn things the other way around, to reverse the universe, reflects our ability to resist things, to question the universe. Our capacity to reconstruct the universe is nothing but society's need to universalise reconstructability. The dominant can resist reconstructability and repress resistance to perpetuate domination; the dominated can cultivate reconstructability and invent resistance to abolish alienation.

An irreconstructable subject is an alienated subject. Irreconstructable subjectivity is just as absurd as an irreconstructable society. Irreconstructable human existence is no existence. A state in which reconstructability is absent is a state of alienation; a state in which reconstructability is denied is a state of domination. We do not only depend on other subjects but we depend, above all, on the *reconstructability* granted by other subjects, since it is through reconstructable interactions with other subjects that we become subjects ourselves. In other words, rather than speculating about the possibility of an irreconstructable subject in-itself, we need to acknowledge the reality of subjects' reconstructability inherent in the social. The third ontological precondition for the possibility of the social is reconstructability.<sup>87</sup>

(d) *The Renormalisability of the Social*

The renormalisability of the social is expressed in the renormalisability of subjects. To exist as a fundamentally renormalisable subject means to exist *through the normativity* created by other subjects. As social selves,

we are normative selves. The fact that we relate to ourselves by being normativised by others reveals our fundamental resignifiability. We are, therefore we mean; and we mean, therefore we are. We are 'there' by being 'about' one another. Human *Dasein* is *Übereinandersein*: we have no alternative but to exist about one another.

The ways in which we signify the natural world, the social world, and our subjective world are so important to the nature of human inter-relationality because they define how and what we perceive or do not perceive of the world, that is, how we make sense or fail to make sense of it. *Übereinandersein* is *Miteinanderanschauen*, that is, *Weltanschauung* is always *Gesellschaftsanschauung*: it is not only a view of the world but also a view *through* the world, *through* society. The symbolic power of meaning cannot be dissociated from the performative power of the habitus. The habitus is normalised and normalising habituality. Yet, normalisation implies renormalisability. Symbolic power is the most crucial form of imposed normativity since it makes us signify the world in presignified ways; symbolic power is imposed signification. Symbolic anti-power is the most crucial form of rearticulated normativity since it challenges us to resignify the world in resignified and, more importantly, resignifying ways; symbolic anti-power is 'subversive resignification'<sup>88</sup>. We constantly create normativity by recreating the existing one.

An irrenormalisable subject is an alienated subject. Irrenormalisable subjectivity is just as absurd as an irrenormalisable society. Irrenormalisable human existence is no existence. A state in which renormalisability is absent is a state of alienation; a state in which renormalisability is denied is a state of domination. We do not only depend on other subjects but we depend, above all, on the *renormalisability* of our relations with other subjects, since it is through renormalisable interactions with other subjects that we become subjects ourselves. In other words, rather than speculating about the possibility of an irreversibly normalised subject beyond society, we need to acknowledge the reality of subjects' renormalisability within society. The fourth ontological precondition for the possibility of the social is renormalisability.<sup>89</sup>

(e) *The Recognisability of the Social*

The recognisability of the social is expressed in the recognisability of subjects. To exist as a fundamentally recognisable subject means to

exist *recognised* by other subjects. As social selves, we are mutually recognised and mutually recognising selves. The fact that we can recognise ourselves by being recognised by others reveals our fundamental intersubjectivity. We are, therefore we recognise; and we recognise, therefore we are. We are 'there' by being 'within' one another. Human *Dasein* is *Ineinandersein*: we have no alternative but to exist within one another.

Recognition may be regarded as the most crucial ontological precondition for the possibility of the social insofar as social life is essentially a struggle for recognition. The subject's deep-seated need for recognition by other subjects constitutes an anthropological invariant which reflects the human dependence upon acceptance by other human beings, no matter how banal, indirect, or hidden the articulation of this recognition may appear to be. The *connaissance* (*Kenntnis*) of somebody always already implies his or her *reconnaissance* (*Anerkennung*). The right to be known is the right to be recognised. The *méconnaissance* (*Unkenntnis*) of somebody always potentially implies his or her *privation* (*Aberkennung*). The danger not to be known is the danger to be deprived, to be unrecognised. Ironically, though, to be unrecognised can also be a privilege when the absence of recognition equals the misrecognition of domination. Domination promotes misrecognition and despises recognition because the latter antagonises the former. Paradoxically, the less recognised (*erkannt*)<sup>90</sup> domination is, the more recognised (*anerkannt*)<sup>91</sup> it becomes. Hence, every struggle for emancipation is essentially a struggle for recognition: ultimately, there is no social emancipation without the empowering force of social recognition.<sup>92</sup>

An unrecognised subject is an alienated subject. Unrecognised subjectivity is just as absurd as an unrecognised society. Unrecognised human existence is no existence. A state in which recognition is absent is a state of alienation; a state in which recognition is denied is a state of domination. We do not only depend on other subjects but we depend, above all, on the *recognition* by other subjects, since it is through recognitive interactions with other subjects that we become subjects ourselves. In other words, rather than speculating about the possibility of an unrecognisable subject in-itself, we need to acknowledge the reality of subjects' mutual recognisability. The fifth ontological precondition for the possibility of the social is recognisability.<sup>93</sup>

In short, the social is composed of relational, reciprocal, reconstructable, renormalisable, and recognisable selves. As relational selves, we exist ‘with’ one another (*Miteinandersein*). As reciprocal selves, we exist ‘through’ one another (*Durcheinandersein*). As reconstructable selves, we exist ‘beyond’ one another (*Jenseitsvoneinandersein*). As renormalisable selves, we exist ‘about’ one another (*Übereinandersein*). And as recognisable selves, we exist ‘within’ one another (*Ineinandersein*). All together these five socio-ontological preconditions constitute the *sine qua non* of human coexistence.

## Notes

1. Bourdieu 2001c, p. 141 (my translation).
2. On ‘the objectivity of the field’, see: Bourdieu 1980a, p. 93; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-c, p. 51; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 255–256; Bourdieu 2001c, p. 96; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, pp. 97, 101, and 106–107.
3. On ‘the spatiality of the field’, see: Bourdieu 1988, p. 10; Bourdieu 1994a, pp. 233–234; Bourdieu 1997a, p. 31; Bourdieu 1997b, pp. 14–15; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, p. 97.
4. On ‘the temporality of the field’, see: Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-e, pp. 74–76; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 96 and 136–137; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, pp. 102 and 109; Wacquant 1992e, p. 47; Wacquant 1999, p. 275.
5. On ‘the practicality of the field’, see: Bourdieu 1980a, p. 112; Bourdieu 1988, p. 10; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-e, pp. 72 and 76; Bourdieu 1994a, pp. 233–234; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 23, 32, and 119; Bourdieu 1997b, p. 15; Bourdieu 1998b, p. 111; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 74 and 129; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, p. 97.
6. Bourdieu 1980a, p. 112 (my translation).
7. On ‘the constructability of the field’, see: Bourdieu 1985, p. 73; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 103 and 139.
8. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, p. 96 (italics in original).
9. On ‘the relationality of the field’, see: Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 11–13; Bourdieu 1982a, p. 42; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-c, p. 51; Bourdieu 1997b, pp. 16–17; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, pp. 96–97, 101, 103, and 106–107; Accardo 1997, p. 44; Vandenberghe 1999, esp. pp. 32, 42–46, and 51–61.
10. On ‘the plurality of the field’, see: Bourdieu 1987, p. 32; Bourdieu 1997a, p. 123; Alexander 2000 [1995], p. 91; Andréani 1996, p. 49; Lahire 1999b, p. 26.
11. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, p. 104 (italics removed from ‘dynamic borders’).
12. See Bourdieu 1997a, p. 180: ‘[...] l’espace des positions comme des espaces de possibles plus ou moins ouverts où s’annoncent, de manière plus ou moins impérative, les choses qui s’imposent à eux comme “à faire”.’ Unfortunately, in the English edition *ouverts* has been translated as ‘wide’, rather than ‘open’. See Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 151: ‘as more or less wide spaces of possibles in which the things that offer themselves to them as “to be done” present themselves more or less compellingly.’
13. On ‘the potentiality of the field’, see: Bourdieu 1980a, p. 89; Bourdieu 1997a, p. 258; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 74, 118, 189, and 194; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, pp. 97, 100, and 102.
14. Bourdieu 1990 [1980], p. 4.
15. Bourdieu 1997a, p. 134 (my translation).
16. Bourdieu 1994a, p. 171 (my translation).

17. On 'the functionality of the field', see: Bourdieu 1977 [1972], p. 184; Bourdieu 1980a, p. 11; Bourdieu 1984b, p. 10; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-e, pp. 72–74; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 124, 134, 166, and 255; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 30, 92–93, and 109; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, pp. 102–103.
18. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, p. 103.
19. On 'the indeterminacy of the field', see: Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 28–29; Bourdieu 1984b, p. 9; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-d, p. 58; Bourdieu 1997a, p. 180; Bourdieu 1997b, p. 16; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 96 and 123; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, pp. 99, 102–105, and 108–109; Bon and Schemeil 1980, p. 1207; Crowley 2002, p. 152.
20. Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-e, p. 72.
21. Bourdieu 1997b, p. 14 (my translation).
22. On 'the determinacy of the field', see: Bourdieu 1980a, p. 93; Bourdieu 1997b, pp. 14–15 and 17; Bourdieu 2001c, p. 74; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, pp. 97 and 105; Jenkins 1992, p. 86; Karsenti 1995, p. 667.
23. See Bourdieu 1994a, p. 234. See also Bourdieu 1997a, p. 119.
24. Bourdieu 1997b, p. 16 (my translation).
25. See Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 116–117.
26. On 'the autonomy of the field', see: Bourdieu 1977 [1972], p. 184; Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 93, 97, 112–113, and 226–227; Bourdieu 1982a, p. 39; Bourdieu 1984b, p. 9; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-c, p. 51; Bourdieu 1988, pp. 9–10; Bourdieu 1994a, pp. 171 and 233–234; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 23, 27, 29–32, 116–117, 119, 121, 123, 134, 140, and 150; Bourdieu 1997b, pp. 14–16; Bourdieu 1998b, p. 111; Bourdieu 2001b, p. 48; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 67, 74, 95–96, and 100; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, pp. 97 and 103–104; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992f, p. 189.
27. On 'the heteronomy of the field', see: Bourdieu 1982c, p. 9; Bourdieu 1997a, p. 134; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 6–7; Fabiani 1999, p. 86; Jenkins 1992, p. 86.
28. See, for example: Luhmann 1995 [1984], esp. pp. 12–58, 176–209, and 437–477; Luhmann 2002, pp. 11–17 and 66–118. See also, for example: Baecker 2002, pp. 7–20 and 83–110; Baraldi, Corsi and Esposito 1997, pp. 29–33 and 195–199; Bourdieu 1986a, p. 4; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, pp. 102–104; Krause 2001, pp. 9–11 and 16–56; Mingers 2002; Reese-Schäfer 1999, pp. 37–44 and 73–83.
- For detailed comparisons between Luhmannian systems theory and Bourdieusian field theory, see, for example: Beer 2006; Bohn 1991, pp. 99–116 and 137–139; Bohn 2005; Hahn 1991, pp. 7–8; Kneer 2004; Nassehi and Nollmann 2004; Nollmann 2004; Saake 2004.
29. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, p. 102.
30. It should be noted, however, that capital is field-transcendently convertible: capital accumulated in one field can be converted into the capital relevant to another field. On Bourdieu's notion of 'interconvertibility', see, for example, Bourdieu 1977 [1972], p. 178.
31. See Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-e, p. 73.
32. See *ibid.*
33. On 'the contestability of the field', see: Bourdieu 1984b, p. 9; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-d, p. 58; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-e, pp. 72–73 and 76; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 71 and 123; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, pp. 99, 102–104, and 108–109; Bon and Schemeil 1980, p. 1207.
34. Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 99 (italics in original).
35. On 'the homology of the field', see: Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-e, pp. 73 and 76; Bourdieu 1997a, p. 119; Bourdieu 2005 [2000], pp. 213–215; Bourdieu 2001c, p. 118; Bourdieu and de Saint Martin 1976, pp. 14–17; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, pp. 105–107.
36. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 126.
37. See Bourdieu 1980a, p. 76.
38. On 'the subjectivity of the habitus', see: Bourdieu 1977 [1972], p. 167; Bourdieu 1980a, p. 111; Bourdieu 1997a, p. 164; Bourdieu 2005 [2000], p. 211; Bourdieu 2001b, pp. 17 and 26; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 126.
39. Cf. Krais 2004, pp. 95–96.



40. Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 152.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
43. On 'the spatiality (or corporeality) of the habitus', see: Bourdieu 1977c, pp. 51 and 53; Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 58, 96, 99, 116–117, 120–124, and 157; Bourdieu 1982a, p. 51; Bourdieu 1982f, pp. 84, 89–90, 92, and 94–95; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 163, 168–171, 173, 176, 180, 186, 205–206, 221, and 249; Bourdieu 1998b, pp. 102–103; Bourdieu 2001b, p. 17; Bourdieu 2001c, p. 90; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, p. 74; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 134; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992e, p. 149.
44. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 133 (italics in original).
45. On 'the temporality of the habitus', see: Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 88, 92, and 94; Bourdieu 1994a, p. 170; Bourdieu 1997a, p. 104; Bourdieu 2005 [2000], p. 211; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, pp. 126–7, 133, and 138; Jenkins 1992, p. 69.
46. See Bourdieu 1980a, p. 28.
47. Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 137.
48. On 'the practicality of the habitus', see: Bourdieu 1992 [1977], p. 165; Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 22, 26, 29, 43–44, 53, 87, 99, 111, and 115; Bourdieu 1982e, p. 37; Bourdieu 1982f, p. 84; Bourdieu 1994a, p. 23; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 23, 164, 170, 220–221, and 251; Bourdieu 2001b, p. 17; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 86 and 102; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, pp. 120–121, 123, and 131.
49. Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 136.
50. On 'the constructability of the habitus', see: Bourdieu 1980a, p. 87; Bourdieu 1982e, p. 37; Bourdieu 1994a, p. 23; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 120, 164, 170, 172, and 208; Bourdieu 2001b, p. 16; Bourdieu 2001c, p. 154.
51. In German: '*Ich habe da keinen Bezug zu.*'
52. Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 142.
53. See *ibid.*
54. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
55. On 'the relationality of the habitus', see: Bourdieu 1980a, p. 101; Bourdieu 1994a, p. 23; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 168–169, 172, and 220–221; Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron 1968, p. 79; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, pp. 122, 127, and 135.
56. On 'the plurality of the habitus', see: Bourdieu 1995a, p. 10; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 158–159; Bourdieu and Eagleton 1992, p. 118; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, pp. 128 and 130; Knoblauch 2003, pp. 190 and 192; König 2003, p. 91; Taylor 1995, p. 570.
57. Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 150.
58. See Bourdieu 1997a, p. 258: 'L'habitus est ce "pouvoir-être" [...]'.—Translation: 'Habitus is this "can-be" [...].'
59. Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 150 (italics added).
60. On 'the potentiality of the habitus', see: Bourdieu 1980a, p. 94; Bourdieu 1980b, p. 2; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 220, 251, and 258.
61. Bourdieu 1990 [1980], p. 52.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 109 ('habitus' italicised in the English translation, 'orchestration des habitus' italicised in the French original text). See Bourdieu 1980a, p. 187: '[...] le fonctionnement du système suppose l'*orchestration des habitus* [...].'
63. On 'the functionality of the habitus', see: Bourdieu 1977 [1972], p. 159; Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 32, 87, 116–117, 152, and 163; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, pp. 101 and 105.
64. Bourdieu 1982a, p. 48 (my translation).
65. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 136 (italics removed).
66. *Ibid.*, p. 122. See also Bourdieu 1997a, p. 120.
67. On 'the indeterminacy of the habitus', see: Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 124 and 167; Bourdieu 1994a, p. 173; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 120, 170, 193, 215, 251, and 279; Bourdieu 2001c, p. 89; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, p. 108; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, pp. 122, 130, and 140; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992e, pp. 167–168.

68. See, for example: Bourdieu 1977 [1972], p. 83; Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 28, 90, and 122; Bourdieu 1982d, p. 16; Bourdieu 1982f, p. 84; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 44, 166, 205, and 222; Bourdieu 1998b, p. 102; Bourdieu 2001c, p. 129; Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron 1968, p. 46.

69. On 'the determinacy of the habitus', see: Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 28, 90, and 122; Bourdieu 1982d, p. 16; Bourdieu 1982f, p. 84; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 44 and 166; Bourdieu 2001c, p. 129; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 121; Brubaker 1993, p. 213; Camic 2000 [1986], esp. pp. 327–354; Ebrecht 2002, pp. 229 and 234; Liénard and Servais 2000 [1979], p. 88.

70. Bourdieu 1980a, p. 94 (my translation); original text in French: '[...] il est ce qui confère aux pratiques leur *indépendance relative* par rapport aux déterminations extérieures du présent immédiat.' (Italics in original.)

In the English edition, '*indépendance relative*' has been translated as 'relative autonomy' (italicised in the original French edition, but not italicised in the English edition). See Bourdieu 1990 [1980], p. 56.

71. On 'the autonomy of the habitus', see: Bourdieu 1977c, p. 53; Bourdieu 1980a, p. 101; Bourdieu 1997a, p. 190; Addi 2002, p. 138; Camic 2000 [1986], p. 334.

72. On 'the heteronomy of the habitus', see: Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 109 and 121; Bourdieu 1982e, p. 35; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 120, 174, and 214; Bourdieu 1998b, p. 102; Bon and Schemeil 1980, p. 1215; Butler 1999, p. 125.

73. On 'the contestability of the habitus', see: Bourdieu 1977 [1972], pp. 184 and 188; Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 217, 221, and 223; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-d, p. 58; Bourdieu 1986b, p. 241; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 213, 217, and 258; Bourdieu 2001b, p. 57; Bourdieu 2001c, p. 70; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, p. 101; Calhoun 1995b, p. 138.

74. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 128.

75. Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 135 (italics in original).

76. On 'the homology of the habitus', see: Bourdieu 1977 [1972], pp. 72–95; Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 111–113, 138, 178, and 183; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 22, 116, 120, 122–123, and 135; Bourdieu 2005 [2000], pp. 213–215; Bourdieu 2001c, p. 143; Bourdieu and de Saint Martin 1976, pp. 14–17; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, pp. 115–117.

77. See, for example: Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 119, 209, and 256–257; Bourdieu 2003, p. 79; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, p. 97; Accardo 1997, p. 145; Andréani 1996, p. 50; Bronckart and Schurmans 1999, pp. 156–157; Brubaker 1993, p. 214; Burkitt 1997, p. 194; Calhoun 1995b, p. 136; Camic 2000 [1986], p. 339; Cronin 1997, p. 211; Herz 1996, p. 224; Jenkins 1992, p. 85; Liénard and Servais 2000 [1979], p. 90; Mesny 1998, p. 168; Mesny 2002, p. 65; Singer 1999, p. 287; Smith 2001, pp. 157, 160, and 168; Swartz 1997, p. 294; Wagner 2003, p. 206.

78. Bourdieu 1992, p. 232.

79. On 'relationality', see: Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 12–13, 139–140, 151, and 229; Bourdieu 1982a, p. 42; Bourdieu 1982f, p. 69; Bourdieu 1984b, p. 4; Bourdieu 1994a, pp. 17 and 20; Bourdieu 1997a, p. 220; Bourdieu 1998b, pp. 109, 113, and 124; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, p. 97; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 135.

80. Bourdieu 1977 [1972], p. 9.

81. *Ibid.*

82. *Ibid.*

83. See Pearsall 1998, p. 1549.

84. On 'reciprocity', see: Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 168–169, 170–171, and 178–179; Bourdieu 1997a, p. 235.

85. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 133 (italics in original).

86. *Ibid.* (already quoted above).

87. On 'reconstructability', see: Bourdieu 1977 [1972], p. 5; Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 87 and 112; Bourdieu 1982e, p. 37; Bourdieu 1985, p. 73; Bourdieu 1994a, p. 23; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 120, 164, 170, 172, and 208; Bourdieu 2001b, p. 16; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 103, 139, and 154; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, p. 108.

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88. Butler 1999, p. 123. See also *ibid.*, p. 120.

89. On 'renormalisability', see: Bourdieu 1976b, p. 127; Bourdieu 1977c, p. 51; Bourdieu 1980c, p. 70; Bourdieu and Boltanski 1975, pp. 10–11.

90. Meaning: 'known', 'seen', or 'understood'.

91. Meaning: 'accepted', 'respected', or 'agreed to'.

92. See Bourdieu 2002b, p. 351 (already referred to above).

93. On 'recognisability', see: Bourdieu 1976a, pp. 90, 93, and 97; Bourdieu 1977b, p. 9; Bourdieu 1977c, pp. 51–53; Bourdieu 1979b, pp. 4–6; Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 89, 114, 168, 170, 171, 178, 184–185, 188, 200, 210, 223–224, and 236–239; Bourdieu 1980b, pp. 2–4; Bourdieu 1980c, pp. 63 and 67–70; Bourdieu 1982b, pp. 59 and 62; Bourdieu 1982e, pp. 26, 28, 31, 36, 39, 47, and 54–55; Bourdieu 1982f, pp. 62, 69, 74–75, 78, and 93; Bourdieu 1985, p. 73; Bourdieu 1994a, pp. 165–166, 189, and 234; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 114, 125, 135, 236, and 283–288; Bourdieu 1998b, pp. 7–8; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 70, 112–113, and 142; Bourdieu 2002a, p. 4; Bourdieu 2003, p. 85; Bourdieu and Boltanski 1975, pp. 10–11 and 16; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992e, pp. 147–148 and 168.

## Chapter 8

### The Reflection upon Reflexive Sociology

Far from representing an uncontroversial and contradiction-free programmatic endeavour, Bourdieusian social theory contains some serious shortcomings. Hence, despite its overall programmatic strength and convincing argumentative composition, the project of reflexive sociology suffers from a number of substantial limitations, which shall be discussed in this chapter. No attempt shall be made to develop a comprehensive critique of the Bourdieusian project. Instead, the present chapter only focuses on those controversial points that are particularly relevant to the theorisation of the social.

#### ***i) The Deformation of Objectivity: The Simplification of the Social***

The Bourdieusian approach to the nature of social objectivity contains at least three substantial theoretical problems: (a) the problem of scientism, (b) the problem of *champisme*, and (c) the problem of functionalism.

(a) *The Problem of Scientism*

The problem of scientism concerns the idea of *scientificity* endorsed by Bourdieusian social theory. This approach holds that sociology is the scientific study of society, which enables the social scientist to uncover the underlying mechanisms of the social world. In essence, the scientific character of sociology is thought to be justified on the basis of the assumption that there is a fundamental difference between ordinary and scientific knowledge. The Bourdieusian conception of sociology is problematic, however, because of the very reasons that it puts forward to justify the dichotomous distinction between ordinary and scientific knowledge. Since the Bourdieusian conception of sociology is based on this distinction, it needs to confront the following problems.

First, the very *distinction* between ordinary knowledge and scientific knowledge can only be defended insofar as it is considered to be an ideal-typical, rather than a clear-cut, distinction: on the one hand, because even the most critical form of social-scientific knowledge cannot deny its derivation from ordinary knowledge, just as the most abstract form of language cannot deny its derivation from ordinary language; and, on the other hand, because ordinary people also develop more or less systematic and ‘sociologically imaginative’<sup>1</sup> ways of making sense of their lives, no matter how rudimentary and questionable their knowledge production may appear from a scientific perspective. The social world is a world of meaning-producing entities.

Second, the presumed *hierarchy* between ordinary and scientific knowledge can only be sustained if the genuine value and validity of ordinary knowledge are fully appreciated in relation, rather than in opposition, to scientific knowledge. Ordinary knowledge *is* valuable and valid for ordinary people. Whether or not it is valuable and valid according to scientific standards is an entirely different question. The Habermasian ‘transcendental’ validity claims, supposedly inherent in language, are expressed by the speakers in ordinary speech, that is, they are ordinarily transcendental and transcendently ordinary validity claims. Ordinary knowledge is essential not only to ordinary people’s understanding of the world, but also to the sociological understanding of these people. Sociological analysis must aim at the understanding of people’s ordinary understanding if it seeks to do sociology with and

through, rather than against and above, society. The social world is a world of understanding-oriented entities.

Third, if *priority* is to be given to scientific knowledge in order to deconstruct ordinary knowledge, that is, if the social-scientific enlighteners are to enlighten the unenlightened, then we are confronted with an extremely pessimistic, if not cynical, view of the social. Instead of narcissistically advocating and praising the insightfulness of its own knowledge production, sociological analysis must focus on both the distortive *and* the insightful knowledge production of ordinary people if it seeks to be the study, rather than the educator, of society. The social world is a world of perceptive entities.

Fourth, the *functionality* of scientific knowledge is just as problematic as the functionality of ordinary knowledge. Both forms of knowledge are socially embedded, both are socially biased, and both fulfil a specific *social* function. Both ordinary and scientific knowledge can serve the reproductive function of perpetuating the established social order, and both can serve the subversive function of undermining the established social order. Reproductive immanence is not an exclusive burden of ordinary knowledge, and creative transcendence is not an exclusive privilege of scientific knowledge. The social world is a world of functionally reproductive *and* potentially subversive entities.

Fifth, the objectively existing *asymmetry* between the ordinary actor and the social researcher can hardly be denied. The structural discrepancy between the two reflects a positional gap that is inscribed in the very structure of social objectivity. Yet, it must not be forgotten that both 'unprivileged' social laypersons *and* 'privileged' social researchers have a *sens pratique*. The largely unconscious structure of the *sens pratique* destroys any scholastic illusions about the intellectualist control of one's life by virtue of critical reasoning, as opposed to practical reasoning. In praxis, reflexive sociologists are just as constrained by the practical imperatives of social life as ordinary actors: the critical reflection upon our *sens pratique* does not imply our self-granted absolution from it.<sup>2</sup> Hence, rather than endorsing a scientistic notion of objectivity according to which reflexive sociologists can be asymmetrically separated from ordinary people, we need to recognise that, despite their structurally different situatedness in society and despite their consequently diverging epistemological horizons, both are caught up in the

practical constraints of ordinary social life. The social world is a world of practically constrained entities.

(b) *The Problem of Champisme*

The problem of *champisme*, or literally ‘fieldism’, refers to the Bourdieusian tendency to reduce the nature of social objectivity to the nature of fields. Since fields are essentially regarded as the ontological ‘base’ of social objectivity, all the other micro- and macrosociological configurations, both on the material and on the symbolic level, are reduced to quasi-superstructural products of fields. This is most importantly the case for the habitus, which ultimately appears to stand for nothing but an epiphenomenal product of the field, a ‘fish in the water’<sup>3</sup> whose anatomy and behaviour can be seen as mechanical responses to its environment. What is most ironical about the field-based account of the social is that it tends to reproduce precisely the main objectivist flaws which it claims to transcend: the structuralist-objectivist, the determinist-objectivist, and the substantialist-objectivist conceptions of the social. A field-based notion of the social can only be convincingly defended if it proves that it can overcome the following objectivist fallacies.

First, field theory needs to prove that it is not trapped in a *structuralist-objectivist* view of the social. Yet, if a field is considered to be a configuration of objectively existing underlying structures which govern both the constitution and the evolution of the social, then the totality of social structures is basically equated with the totality of field-specific structures. Hence, the *opus operatum* of the field in particular would represent the *opus operatum* of the social in general. The particularity of the field would explain the generality of the social. The ‘structuralism of the field’ would be the ‘fieldism of structure’. The social would be governed by ‘the dictatorship of the field’, rather than by ‘the dictatorship of the agents’. Field-structuralism can only be avoided if field theory is able to show that the structural configurations of social objectivity are created by the subjects themselves: *we* are the structures.

Second, field theory needs to show that it is capable of overcoming a *determinist-objectivist* view of the social. If, however, one ascribes not only an omnipresent, but even an omnipotent role to the hidden structures of fields, then the Marxist notion of the determining ‘economic

base'<sup>4</sup> is indeed replaced by the Bourdieusian notion of the determining 'field base'. In order to refute the view that 'Bourdieu's point of departure is openly deterministic'<sup>5</sup>, one needs to show that both field *and* habitus—that is, both object *and* subject—constitute the Bourdieusian point of departure for the theorisation of the social. Otherwise, the 'determinism of the field' would equal the 'fieldism of determinacy', a social determinacy exclusively defined by the power of fields. Field-determinism can only be circumvented if field theory is able to demonstrate that the determinacy of social objectivity depends upon both the fields *and* its carriers: determinacy is dialectical.

Third, field theory is in danger of reproducing a *substantialist-objectivist* view of the social. If the structural gap between the field's underlying substantial structures and the field's observable surface level is so pronounced that the carriers of a field are completely ignorant about the particular logic by which their field is driven, then their rational capacity to understand their own embeddedness in the social world is fundamentally discredited. Social action is paradoxical insofar as social agents are both inhibited and enabled by their immediate immersion in the field-specific realm of the social. On the one hand, field-specific immersion makes the agents blind and dogmatic when their field-view (*Feldanschauung*) is converted into their world-view (*Weltanschauung*). On the other hand, field-specific immersion also makes the agents perceptive and reflective when their field-view (*Feldanschauung*) is transformed into a contemplative self-view (*Selbstanschauung*), notably in situations of crisis. Given the relative fragility of their field-specific immersion in the world, agents can be forced to question the underlying imperatives which they normally take for granted. There is always a potential disillusionment within *illusio*. Field-substantialism can only be transcended if field theory is prepared to accept that field-immersed subjects possess the interpretive capacity to make sense of the substantial powers that constrain their lives.

(c) *The Problem of Functionalism*

The problem of functionalism manifests itself in the Bourdieusian attempt to understand *every* social phenomenon in terms of its functional positioning within the social macrocosm. Consequently, social objectivity tends to be seen as the accumulation of functionally intercon-



nected and functionally driven structures. The functionalist ontologisation of the social is not problematic due to its emphasis on the relational nature of the social; on the contrary, this is precisely its strength, since it rightly insists upon the unavoidability of human interrelationality. Nevertheless, the functionalist ontologisation of the social *is* problematic due to its emphasis on the power-driven nature of the social. This is its weakness, since it implicitly treats power as a functional category of totality, transcendentality, and homology.

First, the *functionalist totalisation of power* stems from the idea that ‘the goal of *all* human behavior in *all* fields is the capture of capital and power within fields’<sup>6</sup>. Hence, power is portrayed not only as an omnipresent, but also as an omnipotent force strong enough to penetrate *every* single sphere of the social. The functionalist totalisation of power views every social action in terms of its power-driven determinacy. According to this view, the social actors are functionally determined by (1) their situatedness, (2) their positionality, (3) their dispositionality, (4) their interestedness, and (5) their strategicness. In other words, every actor (1) is placed within a specific social space, (2) occupies a specific position in this space, (3) is equipped with specific corresponding dispositions, (4) pursues specific corresponding interests, and (5) develops specific corresponding strategies to pursue these interests, which are mainly aimed at the acquisition of capital.

Thus, power is totalising insofar as we are *all* and *always* supposed to obey the functional logic of situatedness, positionality, dispositionality, interestedness, and strategicness. Practically this implies that all social encounters—even the seemingly most innocent ones, ‘such as “small talk”, conversation between intimates, or other “forms of talk”’<sup>7</sup>—are supposed to obey the structural logic of power-driven functionality. Contrary to this functionalist totalisation of power, however, we need to draw a careful analytical distinction: the fact that every social action is *power-permeated* does not mean that every social action is *power-motivated*. The omnipresence of field-specific determinants (such as social space, position, and disposition) or socio-structural determinants (such as class, ethnicity, and gender) in every social action implies only potentially, rather than necessarily, their omnipotence. Power is always an integral component *of* social action, but not always the reason *for* social action.

Second, the *functionalist transcendentalisation of power* is doubly ironic because it contradicts both the reflexive-sociological commitment to the historical contextualisation of social action and the reflexive-sociological opposition to the economistic reduction of social action. The Bourdieusian project claims to be committed to the contextualisation of power in specific social practices. Yet, by ‘viewing every practice—from within a one-sided ontological framework (as in Bourdieu’s approach)—as the operation of power or as an outlet for strategic relations’<sup>8</sup>, strategic action is converted into the ontological prototype of social action *beyond* the specific context in which social action takes place. The Bourdieusian project claims to be opposed to the economistic reduction of social action.<sup>9</sup> By asserting the ontological primacy of strategic action, however, the Bourdieusian conception of social action does not diverge from, but coincides with rational action theory.

Thus it is, in this respect, diametrically opposed to the Habermasian conception of social action: whereas the Bourdieusian picture portrays social action as ultimately derived from strategic action (*‘pessimistic derivative argument’*), the Habermasian picture portrays social action as ultimately derived from communicative action (*‘optimistic derivative argument’*).<sup>10</sup> Ironically, both approaches put forward a ‘transcendental’ notion of social action: be it the universal preponderance of strategy, in the Bourdieusian case, or the universal orientation towards comprehensibility, in the Habermasian case. Whereas the Bourdieusian ‘field-transcendental’ perspective interprets social action as ultimately oriented towards reaching *power*<sup>11</sup>, the Habermasian ‘communicative-transcendental’ perspective conceives of social action as ultimately oriented towards reaching *understanding*<sup>12</sup>.

Nevertheless, Bourdieu’s functionalist transcendentalisation of power is to be rejected, for it presupposes a context-independent and strategy-derivative conception of social action. If the social were driven by power independently of context, power would be omnipotent in *any* context. If the social were based exclusively on strategic action, social action would be strategically motivated in *every* situation. Power is not transcendently, but contextually determined; and social action is not transcendently, but contextually strategy-driven.

Third, the *functionalist homologisation of power* is due to the homological conception of the social. The key problem with the homological

conception of the social is the *congruent* homologisation of object and subject.<sup>13</sup> According to this 'formal binary logic'<sup>14</sup>, which underlies the interpenetrative relationship between field and habitus, objectivity and subjectivity must rightly be understood in relation to one another; the problem arises, however, when this relationship is conceived in functional and, even more debatably, in homological terms. Similarly to a functionalist reading of the Marxian model of base and superstructure, a functionalist interpretation of the Bourdieusian model of field and habitus 'involves a reduction of meaning to the social conditions of its production'<sup>15</sup>. Hence, if the creation of subjectivity is reduced to a merely functional outcome of the production of objectivity, then the subject can equally be reduced to a functional appendage of the overarching power of its social environment. It is fairly uncontroversial to claim that subject and object stand in a structural relationship to one another (*relational existence*); it is slightly more controversial to assert that their relationship possesses an underlying functional logic (*functional existence*); it is extremely controversial, however, to affirm that this relationship is always characterised by 'a quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organization'<sup>16</sup> (*homological existence*). This is why it is important to emphasise that both the field *and* the habitus possess relatively autonomous logics of functioning: the latter is just as irreducible as the former. Both object *and* subject are relatively autonomous, that is, both are relatively powerful. In other words, only if the relationship between field and habitus is characterised as *relatively* homological, rather than absolutely homological, can the functionalist homologisation of power be avoided. Power derives from both the object *and* the subject.

## **ii) The Deformation of Subjectivity: The Deradicalisation of the Social**

The Bourdieusian approach to the nature of subjectivity contains at least three substantial theoretical problems: (a) the problem of reproductionism, (b) the problem of corporealism, and (c) the problem of habitualism.

(a) *The Problem of Reproductionism*

The problem of reproductionism is directly linked to the functionalist-homological view of the social. Essentially, it consists of the reduction of the subject to a mere reproducer of its social environment. According to this reproductionist view of the subject, 'the individual, like the electron, is an *Ausgeburts des Felds*: he or she is in a sense an emanation of the field'<sup>17</sup>. Hence, without knowing it, we appear to be condemned to the reproduction of our field-specific determinacy. In theoretical terms, this reproductionist conception of the subject has far-reaching consequences, since the subject appears to be a mere reproducer of the object. 'Bourdieu's theory is at its best, therefore, as a theory of reproduction, and at its weakest as a theory of transformation.'<sup>18</sup> To the extent that subjectivity is predominantly understood in reproductive, rather than transformative, terms, one can hardly account for social change and the fundamentally dynamic nature of the social.

The *reproductive* nature of subjectivity is based on the reproductive features of the habitus: its relationality, its functionality, its determinacy, its heteronomy, and its homology. Hence, it seems reasonable to recapitulate these properties briefly. The relationality of the habitus reflects the subject's dependence upon its relation to the social world. The functionality of the habitus refers to the subject's dependence upon both the unconscious subjective functioning and the unconscious social functioning of the habitus. The determinacy of the habitus describes the subject's simultaneous dependence upon its internal *Sinnprovinzen* and its external *Lebensprovinzen*. The heteronomy of the habitus is derived from the subject's dependence upon social objectivity, revealing both its universally existent relative heteronomy and its potentially existent complete heteronomy. And the homology of the habitus is indicative of the subject's ontological complicity with its social environment.

Nevertheless, these reproductive features are *not* the only properties of the habitus. Thus we *also* need to take into account the, often forgotten, *transformative* properties of the habitus: its temporality, its constructability, its potentiality, its indeterminacy, and its autonomy. The temporality of the habitus refers to its durable *and* dynamic character. The constructability of the habitus consists of its generated *and* generating capacity. The potentiality of the habitus reveals its processual nature, its delimitative power, *and* its creative propensity. The indeter-

minacy of the habitus reminds us that the habitus is a determined *and* determining apparatus. And the autonomy of the habitus is rooted in its irreducible, coexistential, *and* subjective nature. In short, the habitus is both a reproductive *and* a transformative capacity. A merely reproductionist conception of subjectivity can only be avoided if we account for the dialectical nature of subjectivity.

(b) *The Problem of Corporealism*

The problem of corporealism stems from the Bourdieusian prioritisation of the body for the understanding of the social. The theoretical *strength* of the insistence upon the corporeal nature of the social lies in the simultaneous transcendence of three fundamental dualisms: first, the transcendence of the *subject-object dualism*, since the object is embodied in the subject; second, the transcendence of the *mind-body dualism*, since consciousness is embedded in the body; and, third, the transcendence of the *nature-society dualism*, since the body is permeated by the social world. Yet, the theoretical *weakness* of the Bourdieusian emphasis on the importance of the body for the constitution of social life is its *underestimation of consciousness*. Bourdieu's underestimation of consciousness has three major consequences.

The first consequence is the *derationalisation of the subject*. It is based on the assumption that consciousness represents only a *peripheral capacity* of the subject. According to this view, subjectivity is characterised by the preponderance of the unconscious, as opposed to the conscious, structures of the habitus. The bodily unconscious of the habitus is a manifestation of the collective unconscious of society. As such, the body is a form of collective intimacy. Yet, the 'removal of consciousness from the development of habitus'<sup>19</sup> degrades our rational capacity to control our actions to the level of relative irrelevance. Since the bodily nature of the habitus is largely unconscious, consciousness is seen as a rather peripheral human faculty which plays only a minor role in the determination of social action. In other words, consciousness is regarded at best as an integral, but by no means as a fundamental, component of the subject. As a consequence, 'the role in social life of deliberate, knowing, decision-making informed by whatever rationality [...] is vastly underestimated by Bourdieu'<sup>20</sup>. Consciousness represents not a peripheral, but a pivotal capacity of the subject.

The second consequence is the *disempowerment of the subject*. It is based on the assumption that consciousness represents only a *limited capacity* of the subject. Thus, the power of consciousness is not only discredited in relation to the power of the body as a whole, but its power is discredited in terms of consciousness itself. Consciousness is conceived not only as a marginal facet, but also as a relatively powerless capacity of the subject. Yet, this corporealist conception of human subjectivity does not do justice to the fact that ‘actors are more knowledgeable about the social world than Bourdieu is prepared to allow’<sup>21</sup>. Rational consciousness *is* limited, but it is *also* empowering. One constitutive feature that distinguishes us as human beings from animals is precisely our *rational* capacity to determine our lives *within* the determinacy imposed upon us by the natural and social world. Subjects are not exclusively driven by the ‘thoughtlessness of habit’<sup>22</sup>, but they are also motivated by the thoughtfulness of consciousness, which enables them to gain relative autonomy within the relative heteronomy inherent in their natural and social existence. Consciousness represents a limited but empowering capacity of the subject.

The third consequence is the *degradation of the subject*. It is based on the assumption that consciousness represents simply a *bodily capacity* of the subject. According to this view, consciousness constitutes not only a peripheral and limited human capacity, but also a corporeal capacity because it is physically embedded in the human body. The problem with this corporealist notion of consciousness is that it is associated with a rather impoverished notion of the subject. Not only does it underestimate the relative autonomy gained by the human subject in virtue of consciousness; it also undervalues the relative autonomy of consciousness itself. Consciousness can be regarded as one of the most distinctive human features, no matter how bodily and socially determined it may be. Whether one believes in the distinctive centrality of the subject’s communicative capacity<sup>23</sup>, or the subject’s reflexive capacity<sup>24</sup>, or the subject’s critical and moral capacity<sup>25</sup>—there seems to be a philosophical vacuum to be filled if the anthropological idiosyncrasy of the human subject is not explored in terms of its central socio-ontological capacities, which are rooted in human nature while at the same time raising the subject above nature. Consciousness represents not simply a bodily, but also a socio-transcendental capacity of the subject.

(c) *The Problem of Habitualism*

The problem of habitualism refers to the habitual nature ascribed to the subject by the Bourdieusian theory of the habitus. The controversial point is not so much the habitual nature of social action as such. On the contrary, the preponderance of habituality in social life allows for the possibility of social order. What is controversial and worth reflecting upon, however, is the role of habituality in relation to individual and social change. To be more precise, the question to be posed is why both individual and social change can occur *despite* the predominant role of habituality in social life. In order to avoid a mechanistic conception of social action according to which the subject is so caught up in the routine-driven schemes of social life that there is no room for individual and social change, it seems reasonable to look into the precise *role* which habituality plays in social life.

First, habituality fulfils a discharging function (*Entlastungsfunktion*). The habitus is, above all, a *sens pratique*. As a practical sense, it enables us to confront and cope, more or less successfully, with the practical imperatives of social life. The relative regularity of our habitus reflects the routinised nature of social life: the existence of social order would be impossible without the existence of conventional codes on the basis of which social interaction can take place. The need for interaction makes the human species inevitably cultural. Whether a specific culture is characterised by looseness or tightness, complexity or simplicity, individualism or collectivism, vertical or horizontal relationships<sup>26</sup>—*any* type of culture *needs* to rely on the relative routinisation of social action, which allows social order to emerge and persist.

This also applies to the subject. The individual depends on habituality just as much as society depends on it. Inasmuch as every individual needs to rely on the relative routinisation of social action in order to be *gesellschaftsfähig*, every society needs to rely on the relative routinisation of social action in order to be *subjektfähig*. Habituality allows the subject to cope with society just as much as it allows society to cope with the subject.

Second, habituality fulfils a developmental function (*Entwicklungsfunktion*). The habitus is also a *sens générique*. As a generating sense, it enables us to develop and rearticulate our subjectivity constantly. It grants us the privilege of existing simultaneously ‘within’ and ‘beyond’

the social. 'It is only against the background of habitualised action that a foreground opens itself up for intuition and innovation, which has proven to be so significant for human cultures.'<sup>27</sup> Only *against* the background of the habitus are we able to act *for* the foreground of social reality. In this sense, the habitus is a sort of hermeneutic hero: being always develops in the lap of the hitherto-been. The subject can only develop itself and its environment through the already-existing. Nothing can develop out of nothingness. Everything develops through withinness. The habitus embodies our societal withinness, thereby allowing individual and collective development to occur. Since habituality constitutes the horizon which allows individuals to coexist, habituality is *necessary* for individual and social development. Habituality allows the subject to develop within society just as much as it allows society to develop within the subject.

Third, habituality implies a reflexive function (*Reflexionsfunktion*). It is this last function which appears to be substantially undervalued, if not denied, within the Bourdieusian framework of the habitus. The habitus is not only a *sens doxique*, but also a *sens réflexif*. As a reflexive sense, it enables us to contemplate and question our subjectivity. The emphasis on critical reflexivity may seem incoherent because habituality, at least in the Bourdieusian sense, tends to be associated with a state of practical implicitness and doxic taken-for-grantedness. Yet, this one-sided focus on the 'normality' of social existence, i.e. habituality, ignores the importance of the 'abnormality' of social existence, i.e. crisis.

For only crisis constitutes praxis as praxis. Routine is a material derivation from crisis and the solution of the latter. [...] The closer examination of social action [...] shows that subjectivity does not become visible in the smooth, routinised, and habitual course of action, but only in the face of crisis. This means that every attempt to conceptualise subjectivity has to start with crisis in action. For it is only in crisis that subjectivity manifests itself as subjectivity, as non-identical, as peculiar and unique.<sup>28</sup>

One does not have to go so far and provocatively assume that subjectivity reveals its real nature *only* in crisis, but it certainly does make sense to emphasise the importance of habituality *together with* crisis for the constitution of subjectivity. Our ability to cope with reality through



habituality is just as important as our ability to cope with reality through crisis. We learn not only through habit, but also, and often more importantly, through crisis.<sup>29</sup>

Rather than opposing crisis to the habitual, however, the former should be regarded as a constitutive component of the latter. Crisis belongs to habituality just as death belongs to life. One cannot go without the other, at least not in worldly affairs. The potential of crisis to enlighten the self is associated with the reflexive function of every clash with the unforeseen or the unknown. One illustrative example of self-enlightening crisis is the clash of one's identity with difference. Crises caused by a clash with difference force us to learn about ourselves when confronting the unknown: there is no better way of understanding one's native language than by learning a foreign language; there is no better way of understanding one's own culture than by assimilating a foreign culture; there is no better way of understanding oneself than by encountering another. Human habituality can be deciphered most instructively through crises caused by a clash with the unknown or the unexpected.

As a *sens doxique*, the habitus describes our ability to accept the world as it is (*Weltannahmefähigkeit*). As a *sens réflexif*, however, it also describes our ability to question the world as it is (*Reflexionsfähigkeit*). Since habituality does not exclude but implies crisis, it obliges us to reflect upon ourselves. We cope with life (*Lebensbewältigung*) by learning about life (*Lebenserfahrung*), reflecting upon life (*Lebensreflexion*) and changing our life accordingly (*Lebenswandel*). Crisis stimulates individual and social change; crisis is a driving force of the constant rehabituation of the habitual. It is because of, not despite, the preponderance of habituality that crisis forces us to reflect upon this very preponderance in the most ordinary situations. Insofar as habituality and crisis are inseparable, *sens pratique* and *sens réflexif* are also inseparable. The preponderance of habituality always already contains the potentiality of reflexivity.

### **iii) The Deformation of Society: The Underestimation of the Social**

As shown above, the shortcomings inherent in the Bourdieusian conceptions of objectivity and subjectivity are multifaceted and complex. Since the Bourdieusian project aims at the transcendence of the arti-

ficial gap between objectivist and subjectivist accounts of the social, objectivity and subjectivity are regarded as inseparable: *together* they form the two cornerstones of the social. The above criticisms of the Bourdieusian conceptions of objectivity and subjectivity illustrate the difficulties immanent in the Bourdieusian conception of society as a whole, for society represents the dialectical outcome of the interplay between objectivity and subjectivity.

In the literature, Bourdieusian social theory has been criticised for a number of further reasons, including its 'positivist' nature<sup>30</sup>, its contradictory attachment to the philosophy of consciousness<sup>31</sup>, its elitist language<sup>32</sup>, its ethnocentrism<sup>33</sup>, its contradictory anti-intellectualist intellectualism<sup>34</sup>, its vague argumentative elasticity<sup>35</sup>, its insightful but debatable account of gender relations<sup>36</sup>, its misinterpretations of other approaches<sup>37</sup>, its inability to prove the existence of the 'unconscious'<sup>38</sup>, and its lack of originality<sup>39</sup>.

The many criticisms of the Bourdieusian project should be regarded not only as an expression of its inherent flaws, but also as a manifestation of the complexity inherent in any macrotheoretical endeavour to comprehend the nature of the social. As stated above, no attempt shall be made here to scrutinise the entire complexity of Bourdieusian thought. Instead, this chapter will conclude by examining three substantial problems that arise when analysing the Bourdieusian conception of society: (a) the problem of dichotomism, (b) the problem of sociologism, and (c) the problem of fatalism.

*(a) The Problem of Dichotomism*

The problem of dichotomism is ironical since the whole point of the Bourdieusian project is to overcome the artificial separation between objectivism and subjectivism in the social sciences. In terms of the motivational underpinning of reflexive sociology, its strength lies in its intention to overcome the artificial separation between objectivism and subjectivism. In terms of its argumentative underpinning, however, its weakness lies in the doubtfulness of its success in doing so. In other words, although the problem it poses is legitimate and insightful, the solution it proposes is questionable and far from uncontroversial. The Bourdieusian attempt to transcend the objectivist-subjectivist antinomy is problematic in at least three respects.

First, the problem of the relationship between object and subject is as old as sociology itself. Rather than constituting a recent problem of contemporary sociology, the controversial relationship between object and subject belongs to the very heart of sociology as a discipline. The Marxian aphorism about the relationship between social being and consciousness is precisely about the controversial relationship between object and subject: 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.'<sup>40</sup> Thus, one of the core ideas of Marxian thought is to comprehend the relationship between object and subject in sociological terms, thereby refuting idealist thought, which fails to take into account the social conditions in which the subject is structurally embedded.

Second, it is far from clear whether Bourdieusian social theory can claim to have succeeded in overcoming the antinomy between objectivism and subjectivism. 'Although Bourdieu believes that the notion of the habitus resolves the subject-object dualism of social theory, in fact, the habitus relapses against Bourdieu's intentions into the very objectivism which he rejects.'<sup>41</sup> The habitus can indeed be seen as the main conceptual tool aimed at the transcendence of the subject-object dualism because it is supposed to function as a mediator between subject and object. Since the habitus is both the 'internalisation of externality' and the 'externalisation of internality'<sup>42</sup>, it is supposed to overcome the subject-object division by uniting subject and object within the habitus. Yet, insofar as the Bourdieusian project is committed to the fundamental sociological insight that the individual can only be understood in relation to the social conditions which have created it, the 'objective' side is clearly considered to be more powerful than the 'subjective' side within the dialectical relationship between object and subject. To reiterate this point, 'Bourdieu confuses himself and others by calling his project a "transcendence" of the objectivist-subjectivist antinomy [...]; critics are correct to say that Bourdieu remains objectivistic'<sup>43</sup>. At best, one may claim that the Bourdieusian project achieves the 'transcendence' of the subject-object division *although* it acknowledges the preponderance of the object. At worst, one may claim that the Bourdieusian project fails to achieve the 'transcendence' of the subject-object division *because* it acknowledges the preponderance of the object. Either way, the object remains preponderant.<sup>44</sup>

Third, as explained in the above analysis, the two most central concepts in Bourdieusian social theory are the field and the habitus, which—as shown—*share* fourteen fundamental features. These shared features reinforce, rather than contradict, the assumption that the objectivist–subjectivist division has been transcended. The whole point of the analogous examination of field and habitus is to substantiate the view that the Bourdieusian conception of the social succeeds in transcending the artificial division between objectivism and subjectivism. But this is *not* to suggest that it succeeds in transcending the difference between object and subject. Attention should be drawn to the fact that there is one feature which field and habitus do not share: the field has been analysed in terms of ‘objectivity’ and the habitus in terms of ‘subjectivity’. This analytical differentiation is no accident. It indicates that fields are located in the objectivity of the social and that the habitus is located in the subjectivity of the social. Their ontological complicity reveals their ontological *coexistence*, not their *transcendence*. No matter how intimately intertwined they are, they are *not* identical; they describe two different states of being. The difference between field and habitus reveals the difference between object and subject. In summary, the common features of field and habitus indicate the transcendence of the separation between objectivism and subjectivism because they illustrate the extent to which object and subject are ontologically intertwined. Yet, insofar as the field constitutes a form of objectivity and the habitus a form of subjectivity, their structural distinctiveness indicates the difference between object and subject. They go hand in hand, but they are not identical. Reflexive sociology stands for the *Aufarbeitung*<sup>45</sup>, rather than the *Aufhebung*<sup>46</sup>, of the difference between object and subject.

(b) *The Problem of Sociologism*

The problem of sociologism arises out of the very nature of the Bourdieusian project: its sociological nature. The emphasis on the sociological dimensions of human existence is most illustratively expressed in Bourdieu’s attack on so-called scholastic thought. The sociological critique of scholasticism derives its argumentative strength from its praxeological insistence upon the performative power of the habitus. Hence, the notion of the *sens pratique* lies at the heart of the Bourdieusian attempt to understand the essentially practical nature of the social.

Yet, Bourdieu's focus on the practical dimensions of social life is firmly embedded in a constructivist form of *praxeological sociologism*: according to this account, the socially constructed variability of human existence undermines any kind of 'scholastic' speculation about its possible species-unifying universality.<sup>47</sup> Here, however, a case shall be made for precisely the opposite view: in order to understand the specificity of the social, we need to understand its species-constitutive universality. The Bourdieusian approach fails to explore the distinctiveness of human existence for two main reasons.

First, the Bourdieusian perspective does not account for the existence of the *species-constitutive features of the social*. The species-constitutive features of the social refer to those characteristics that *all* human societies, *independently* of their cultural and historical specificity, have in common. Here, these universal features shall be called *socio-ontological conditions*: 'socio' because they are the exteriorised outcome of intersubjectivity; 'ontological' because they belong to the very nature of the social; and 'conditions' because they form the basis on which interaction can take place. The problem with the Bourdieusian account of the social is the *circularity* of the argument about the object-dependent nature of the subject and the subject-dependent nature of the object. The notions of 'genetic structuralism' and 'structuralist constructivism'<sup>48</sup> summarise the view that all social structures are both structured and structuring structures. Yet, the insight that social structures have a dialectical nature does not tell us anything about the *specificity* of human social life, since animals also develop structured and structuring structures which enable them to coexist. In other words, Bourdieusian thought lacks a reflection upon the specificity of human universality, that is, upon the socio-ontological conditions of the human species. 'Because of this, Bourdieu underestimates the species-constitutive dialectic of universality and historicity, which is inherent in social phenomena, and reduces the cultural and the social to the historically specific. This constitution-theoretical deficit leads to the fact that Bourdieu cannot define the specificity of socio-human action.'<sup>49</sup> The exploration of the species-constitutive universality of the social, which goes *beyond* its historical specificity, describes the challenging task of identifying the socio-ontological conditions that make human coexistence fundamentally different from animals' coexistence.

Second, the Bourdieusian perspective does not account for the existence of the *species-constitutive features of the individual*. The species-constitutive features of the individual refer to those characteristics that *all* human beings, *independently* of their cultural and historical determinacy, have in common. Here, these universal features shall be called *socio-ontological competences*: ‘socio’ because they are the interiorised outcome of intersubjectivity; ‘ontological’ because they belong to the very nature of the individual; and ‘competences’ because they represent our ability to interact with others. The habitus could certainly be regarded as such a competence: for it is intersubjectively acquired, it inhabits every individual, and it enables us to relate to the world. Yet, a habitus-based notion of competence would be far too general to tell us anything about the specificity of human competences. The insight that the habitus is both a structured and a structuring structure does not tell us anything about the *specificity* of the human species, since animals also possess structured and structuring apparatuses which enable them to cope with their environment. To sharpen the problem: we need to explore the species-constitutive competences which enable us to coexist as social beings. Our species-specific socio-ontological competences can only be understood in relation to our species-specific socio-ontological conditions: the former would be worth nothing without the latter, and vice versa. One could take a newborn animal, and then educate and treat it as if it were a human being; since it lacks the socio-ontological competences of a human being, it would never be able to interact with human beings the way humans do. One could take a newborn child, and let it grow up and develop in an animal environment free of humans, being treated as if it were an animal; since it would lack the socio-ontological conditions existent in any human community, it would never be able to develop its socio-ontological competences, if it were to survive in the first place. Both cases represent hypothetical scenarios, but they illustrate the problem very clearly: sociology needs to define the individual’s socio-ontological competences in order to understand the nature of the socio-ontological conditions of human existence.

(c) *The Problem of Fatalism*

The problem of fatalism is intimately interrelated with the misrecognition of our socio-ontological competences for the possibility of human

coexistence. Fatalism may be considered a fundamental problem in Bourdieusian thought and its understanding of the social. Its central importance is rooted in three closely interrelated dimensions: (i) socio-ontological pessimism, (ii) socio-ontological defeatism, and (iii) socio-ontological nihilism.

(i) The Bourdieusian notion of the social is based on socio-ontological pessimism. Bourdieu's pessimistic view of the social manifests itself most clearly in the harsh distinction between unprivileged ordinary people and privileged social scientists. The alleged insufficiency of ordinary people's common sense stands in direct contrast to the supposedly enlightening power of social scientist's reflexive knowledge. In other words, within the Bourdieusian framework, lifeworld-pessimism goes hand in hand with scientific optimism. Bourdieusian lifeworld-pessimism is ultimately based upon a pessimistic notion of the subject. Hence, the ordinary subject is supposed to lack the critical competences with which the social scientist is, or at least can be, equipped. The Bourdieusian conception of the subject regards critical reflexivity not as a socio-ontological but as a socio-professional competence. Thus, it does not only lack an elaborate notion of socio-ontological competence, but it seems to deny its very importance. The lack of preoccupation with the most fundamental human faculties which make human life distinctive from animal life ties in with a form of socio-ontological pessimism according to which all social actions are not only power-permeated but also power-motivated, that is, they are driven by the underlying instrumental interest in the acquisition of power. Since people's power-drivenness is supposed to be a largely unconscious socio-psychological mechanism, people are allegedly not aware of their unawareness. If there is any socio-ontological competence, it is our capacity to delude ourselves about the struggle for and over power. In this sense, Bourdieusian 'critical' or 'reflexive' sociology denies the 'critical' and 'reflexive' nature of the social itself.

The main problem of critical sociology is its inability to understand the *critical operations undertaken by the actors*. A sociology which wants to study the critical operations performed *by* actors—a sociology of criticism taken as a specific object—must therefore give up (if only temporarily)

the critical stance, in order to recognize the *normative principles* which underlie the *critical activity of ordinary persons*. If we want to *take seriously the claims of actors* when they denounce social injustice, criticize power relationships or unveil their foes' hidden motives, we must conceive of them as endowed with an *ability to differentiate* legitimate and illegitimate ways of rendering criticisms and justifications. It is, more precisely, this *competence* which characterizes the *ordinary sense of justice* which people implement in their disputes. [...] This approach thus departs from the task of moral philosophy, which is to discover some normative rules and procedures leading to justice, although one can *build a normative model of justice on the actor's sense of justice* which we made explicit.<sup>50</sup>

The Boltanskian plea for a paradigm shift from 'critical sociology' to the 'sociology of critique'<sup>51</sup> reflects the need to account for the ordinary critical capacities of ordinary people employed in ordinary situations. It does not only stand for the systematic attempt to explore the socio-ontological competences inherent in every ordinary subject, but it also stands for the even more ambitious attempt to ground the entire project of sociology in the most fundamental normative competences of ordinary people. Hence, Boltanskian sociology is diametrically opposed to Bourdieusian sociology: whereas the former takes the critical capacities of ordinary people as the very starting point of its understanding of the social, the latter takes the doxic understanding of ordinary people as the very starting point of its critique of the social. In other words, the socio-ontological optimism of Boltanskian sociology stands in direct contrast to the socio-ontological pessimism of Bourdieusian sociology.

The main problem with the Bourdieusian conception of the social is not only that it tends to identify *rapports sociaux* with *rapports de force*, but, in addition, that it does not pay enough attention to the fact that *rapports sociaux* are always *rapports normatifs*. Insofar as we are constantly immersed in normative relations, we are constantly asked to either accept or reject the normativity imposed upon us. The fact that we *are* able to accept or reject the normativity of the given and, more importantly, that we *are* able to justify our reasons for doing so, reveals that actors do possess a fundamental socio-ontological competence which allows them to justify their actions. This is *not* to deny the power



of doxic misrecognition, in the Bourdieusian sense, or the power of ideology, in the Marxian sense; but this is to suggest that not only social scientists or professional critics have the capacity to question doxic or ideological power.

Critique does not represent a transcendental privilege of scholastic thinkers. On the contrary, critique constitutes an immanent capacity of ordinary actors: critical transcendence is inherent in ordinary immanence just as much as metaphysical normativity is inherent in ordinary normativity. To acknowledge that we are all metaphysicians<sup>52</sup> is to recognise our power of recognition. Sociology of critique is the recognition (*Anerkennung*) of our recognitive capacity (*Erkenntnisfähigkeit*). Whether the power of recognition is derived from our 'communicative capacity', in the Habermasian sense, or from our 'critical capacity', in the Boltanskian sense, either way it undermines the alleged predominance of our 'doxic capacity', in the Bourdieusian sense. A sociology of the social needs to be a sociology of our socio-ontological competences in order to do justice to the social itself.

(ii) The Bourdieusian notion of the social is based on socio-ontological defeatism. To be sure, Bourdieu's defeatist view of the social stems from his categorical distrust of ordinary knowledge production and his uncompromising faith in scientific knowledge production. The question which poses itself in the light of such a lightless picture of the social is why social emancipation is worth pursuing in the first place if ordinary relations are ontologically predetermined to be doxic relations. There is no reason to bother if people do not bother. If the 'to be emancipated' cannot realise emancipation because they are *unavoidably* intoxicated by a doxic understanding of the world, then emancipation itself seems to be a pointless project. There is no point in pursuing the triumph of emancipation if we are simultaneously condemned to recognise the unavoidable triumph of doxa. The triumph of doxa is the defeat of the social: the defeat of the ordinary competences of ordinary actors.

If I understand you correctly, then, *science* is still the best tool we have for the *critique of domination*. You fall squarely in line with the modernist project of the *Aufklärung* (and in sharp disagreement with the postmod-

ernists) in that you argue that *sociology*, when it is scientific, constitutes an inherently *politically progressive force*. But isn't there a *paradox* in the fact that, on the one hand, you enlarge the *possibility* of a space of freedom, of a liberating awakening of self-consciousness that brings within rational reach historical possibilities hitherto excluded by symbolic domination and by the misrecognition implied in the doxic understanding of the social world, while, on the other hand, you simultaneously effect a radical *disenchanting* that makes this social world in which we must continue to struggle almost unlivable? There is a strong *tension*, perhaps a *contradiction*, between this will to provide instruments for increasing consciousness and freedom and the demobilization that an overly acute awareness of the pervasiveness of social determinisms threatens to produce.<sup>53</sup>

To convert the utopia of society into the utopia of science is to put the possibility of social emancipation in the hands of scientists, not ordinary people. If we are to accept the dichotomous opposition between science, freedom and enlightenment, on the one hand, and ordinary life, misrecognition and domination, on the other, then we are also obliged to accept the pointlessness of emancipation. If we buy into the logic of the ontological division between ordinary doxa and scientific enlightenment, then there is no *Aufklärung* in a society without science. The only way of creating an emancipated society, in the Bourdieusian sense, would be the creation of a doxa-free society in which all people are social scientists or in which all people are constantly enlightened by social scientists. The doxic 'in-itselfness' of ordinary life could only be transcended by the critical 'in-and-for-itselfness' of scientific reflexivity. Utopia would be degraded to a *von außen Hineingetragen*<sup>54</sup>, to a gift that could only be granted to ordinary people by reflexive social scientists. The ordinary, left on its own, would be defeated by its own doxic constitution. A sociology committed to the possibility of emancipation needs to be a sociology of *social* emancipation in order to do justice to the social itself.

(iii) The Bourdieusian notion of the social is based on socio-ontological nihilism. The Bourdieusian approach *negates* the very possibility of *social* emancipation insofar as it *affirms* the preponderance of *doxic* deception. The negativity of ordinary normativity is to be uncovered by

the positivity of scientific reflexivity. Ultimately, such a nihilistic notion of the social is derived from a totalising notion of power. The alleged powerfulness of underlying structural forces equals the powerlessness of the subject. In essence, the *rapports de force* are supposed to be more powerful than the *force du sujet*. As a totalising category, power is portrayed as both an omnipresent *and* an omnipotent force strong enough to permeate *and* motivate every social action. As a transcendental category, power is portrayed as both a strategy-universal *and* a strategy-derivative force strong enough to define *and* trigger every social action. As a homological category, power is portrayed as both a subject-permeating *and* an object-corresponding force strong enough to functionalise *and* homologise every social action. The combination of the totalising, transcendental, and homological view of power leads to the negation of the subject itself. The negation of the subject is the positivisation of the object. The positivisation of the subject would be the negation of the object. The realisation of the subject is its realisation through the object. In order to negate socio-ontological negativity we have no choice but to affirm the subject's socio-ontological competence. To negate the totalising, transcendental, and homological force of power means to affirm the socialising, practical, and ontological force of critical capacity.

Socio-ontological nihilism can only be transcended by grounding the project of sociology in society itself. This does not mean that one has to embrace a rather romantic notion of ordinary social relations according to which people's lifeworlds constitute powerfree realms of pristine intersubjectivity. Socio-ontological romanticism is just as problematic as socio-ontological nihilism. Both are based on a one-dimensional conception of the social: the former, on the naïve belief in the predominance of reflexivity and mutuality; the latter, on the fatalistic belief in the predominance of doxa and instrumentality. Socio-ontological realism, by contrast, recognises the simultaneous existence of the power-critical and the power-laden constitution of the ordinary social. Utopia is and is not. Only by simultaneously including and excluding itself can emancipation be a contradictory but viable reality. The social depends on us.

## Notes

1. See Mesny 1998, p. 189.
2. Cf. Dreyfus and Rabinow 1999, p. 92.
3. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 127.
4. It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the controversial question of whether the Marxian model of 'base and superstructure' puts forward, or has been misinterpreted as, a deterministic account of the social. For an overview of the most influential interpretations of Marx's model of 'base and superstructure', see, for example: de Lara 1982; Hall 1977; Jakubowski 1990 [1976]; Labica 1982; Larrain 1991 [1983]; Weber 1995.
5. Giner 1999, p. 322.
6. Griller 2000 [1996], p. 197 (*italics added*).
7. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992e, p. 145.
8. Kögler 1996 [1992], p. 229.
9. See, for example, Bourdieu 2005 [2000], esp. pp. 1–17 and 209–222.
10. See chapter 4 (section on 'the problem of lifeworld-idealism') of this book.
11. Cf. Alexander 2000 [1995], pp. 95–97.
12. See Habermas 1984 [1976]-a, p. 1 (already referred to above).
13. Cf. Lahire 1999b, p. 51.
14. Kögler 1997b, p. 231.
15. Cronin 1997, p. 212.
16. Bourdieu 1977 [1972], p. 164 (already quoted above). See also Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 127: 'ontological correspondence'.
17. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, p. 107.
18. Calhoun 1995b, p. 142. See also: Burkitt 1997, p. 194; Ebrecht 2002, pp. 226–228; König 2003, p. 92; Lewandowski 2000, pp. 51–54; The Friday Morning Group 1990, p. 216.
19. Noble and Watkins 2003, p. 525.
20. Jenkins 1992, p. 97.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
23. In the Habermasian sense of *Mündigkeit*. See Habermas 1987 [1965/1968], p. 314.
24. See Kögler 1997a, p. 151.
25. See Boltanski and Thévenot 1991, pp. 40, 43, and 45.
26. See Triandis 1996, esp. pp. 408–409. (According to Triandis's typology, the following main 'cultural syndromes' can be identified: tightness, cultural complexity, active-passive, honor, collectivism, individualism, and vertical and horizontal relationships.)
27. Knoblauch 2003, p. 195 (my translation); original text in German: 'Erst vor dem Hintergrund habitualisierten Handelns öffnet sich ein Vordergrund für Einfall und Innovation, der sich als so bedeutsam für die menschlichen Kulturen erwiesen hat.'
28. Wagner 2003, p. 222 (my translation); original text in German: 'Denn erst die Krise konstituiert die Praxis als Praxis. Die Routine ist eine materiale Ableitung aus der Krise und der Lösung dieser. [...] Die nähere Betrachtung der sozialen Handlung (social act) zeigt nämlich, dass nicht bei einem glatten, routinisierten und gewohnheitsmäßigen Handlungsablauf, sondern erst angesichts einer Krise in dieser Subjektivität manifest in Erscheinung tritt. Das heißt: Jeder Konzeptualisierungsversuch von Subjektivität muss von der Krise im Handeln ausgehen. Denn nur in dieser tritt Subjektivität als Subjektivität, als Nicht-Identisches, Besonderes und Einzigartiges manifest auf.'
29. It should be noted, however, that Bourdieu does acknowledge the crucial link between habituality and crisis. Yet, he regards critical reflexivity, at most, as a transitory and tangential phenomenon, but not as an ordinary and fundamental motivational driving force of social action. On Bourdieu's notion of crisis see, for example: Bourdieu 1977 [1972], pp. 168–169; Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 154n.11, 201, 269, and 318n.32; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 131.

30. See, for example: Bonnewitz 1998, p. 34; Cronin 1997, p. 213; Griller 2000 [1996], pp. 201–204; Jenkins 1992, p. 60; Jenkins 1994, p. 102; Karakayali 2004, p. 356; Lahire 1999a, p. 16.
31. See, for example: Kögler 1997a, p. 152; Wagner 2003, p. 223.
32. See, for example: Clough 2000 [1998], pp. 382–383; The Friday Morning Group 1990, p. 219.
33. See, for example: Hanchard 2003; Robbins 2000, p. 110.
34. See, for example: Panayotopoulos 1999, p. 328; Schatzki 2000 [1987], pp. 307–310; Singer 1999, p. 282; Weiss 1999, p. 319.
35. See, for example, Evens 1999, p. 5.
36. See, for example: Adkins 2004a; Adkins 2004b; Dillabough 2004; Krais 2000; Lawler 2004; Lovell 2004; Reay 2004; Skeggs 2004a; Skeggs 2004b; Vincent 2002; Witz 2004.
37. See, for example: Addi 2002, p. 132 (referring to Bourdieu's alleged misinterpretation of constructivism); Bohman 1997, pp. 178–180 (referring to Bourdieu's alleged misinterpretation of Habermas); Weiss 1999, pp. 319–320 (referring to Bourdieu's purportedly misleading interpretation of Pascal).
38. See, for example: Griller 2000 [1996], p. 193; Hérán 2000 [1987], p. 15.
39. See, for example: Giner 1999, pp. 324–325; Jenkins 1992, pp. 180–181.
40. Marx 2000/1977 [1859], p. 425.
41. King 2000, p. 417.
42. See Bourdieu 1980a, p. 76 (already referred to above). See also Bourdieu 1977 [1972], p. 72.
43. Lau 2004, pp. 369 and 370.
44. See also: Bohman 1997, p. 173; Evens 1999, pp. 3–5, 13, and 30; Giner 1999, pp. 324–325.
45. Meaning: 'critical reappraisal'.
46. Literal translation from German into English: 'abolition', 'rescinding', 'raising', or 'lifting'.
47. To be sure, in the seventh chapter I have sought to show that, although Bourdieu is explicitly opposed to 'scholastic foundationalism', his theoretical framework is based on two theoretical tools that allow for a 'socio-foundational' understanding of human existence. Thus, according to Bourdieu, the homological relationship between field and habitus lies at the heart of *any* social order. In addition, I have argued that the Bourdieusian approach allows us to identify five fundamental preconditions for the very possibility of the social. The point I would like to make here is that, despite the fact that Bourdieu's social theory is undoubtedly 'universalist' in the sense that it provides universal theoretical tools for the study of the social, Bourdieu's socio-constructivist attack on 'scholastic foundationalism' prevents him from exploring the social in terms of its species-specific nature. I will elaborate on the serious theoretical implications of this problem further below in the argument.
48. On the concepts of 'genetic structuralism' and 'structuralist constructivism', see, for example: Bourdieu 1982e, pp. 25 and 57; Bourdieu 1997a, p. 137; Bourdieu 2001c, p. 151; Bourdieu 2001d, p. 8; Accardo 1997, pp. 233 and 259; Addi 2002, pp. 136–142; Baert 1998a, pp. 29–33; Beer 1999, p. 75; Bonnewitz 1998, p. 9; Brubaker 1993, p. 223; Calhoun and Wacquant 2002, pp. 4–5; Ebrecht 2002, p. 229; Joignant 2000, pp. 187–188; Kauppi 2000 [1996], pp. 230–236; Knoblauch 2003, p. 189; Lau 2004, p. 370; Mahar, Harker and Wilkes 1990, p. 21; Margolis 1999, p. 69; Papilloud 2003, p. 109; Passeron 2000 [1986], p. 175; Pinto 1998, p. 150; Wacquant 1992a, p. 11; Wagner 2003, p. 223.
49. Wagner 2003, p. 216 (my translation); original text in German: 'Damit erkennt Bourdieu die den sozialen Phänomenen inhärente gattungskonstitutive Dialektik von Universalität und Historizität und reduziert das Kulturelle und Sozialität auf historisch Spezifisches. Diese konstitutionstheoretischen Defizite führen dazu, dass Bourdieu das Spezifikum sozial-humanen Handelns nicht bestimmen kann.'
50. Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, p. 364 (italics added).

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51. See Boltanski 1990a, p. 55. See also, for example: Boltanski 1990b; Boltanski 1998, esp. pp. 248–251; Boltanski 2002, esp. p. 283.

52. See: Boltanski 1990a, p. 60; Boltanski and Thévenot 1991, p. 418. On the Boltanskian conception of *compétence métaphysique*, see also: de Blic 2000, p. 157; Hoarau 1996, p. 111.

53. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992f, p. 194 (italics added, except for the word *Aufklärung*). See also Evens 1999, p. 24.

54. Translation from German into English: ‘imported from the outside’.



## *Part III*

### **Between Critical Theory and Reflexive Sociology: From the Ontological Foundations of the Social to the Normative Foundations of Critique**





## *Chapter 9*

### **The Cross-Fertilisation of Critical Theory and Reflexive Sociology**

**A**s stated in the introduction, this study seeks to explore the nature of the social not only by analysing Habermasian critical theory in Part I and Bourdieusian reflexive sociology in Part II, but also, more controversially, by cross-fertilising the two approaches in Part III. As the analysis developed above has shown, these two accounts represent two substantially different approaches to the nature of the social. Hence, the attempt to integrate them may at first glance seem surprising. The suspicion that the cross-fertilisation of Habermasian critical theory and Bourdieusian reflexive sociology may result in an unhappy marriage of two diametrically opposed and theoretically incommensurable social thinkers appears to be confirmed by ten straightforward observations.

1. The systematic integration of these two approaches has, to my knowledge, never been undertaken before.
2. Systematic and in-depth comparisons between the two authors are rare in the literature.<sup>1</sup>

3. Most of the comparisons that can be found in the literature are remarkably cursory, rather than systematic.<sup>2</sup>
4. Even the few explicit and more ambitious, albeit rudimentary, attempts to analyse both approaches in relation to one another seek to compare, rather than integrate, them.
5. Most of these comparative analyses tend to emphasise the substantial differences, rather than similarities, between the two approaches. Most prominent is the dichotomous view that Habermas can be regarded as a philosopher, whose anthropological optimism is based on the emancipatory force of communicative action, and Bourdieu as a sociologist, whose anthropological pessimism is based on the reproductive force of homological action, and that, as a consequence, their works are almost incommensurable.
6. Looking directly at Habermas's and Bourdieu's writings, it is striking that their relationship is characterised by the absence of critical dialogue: Habermas's writings lack a systematic and thorough analysis of Bourdieu's work, and Bourdieu's writings contain little in the way of methodical and in-depth analysis of Habermas's work.
7. Their relationship vis-à-vis one another is noticeably asymmetrical: whereas at least quite a few explicit comments on Habermas's work can be found in Bourdieu's writings<sup>3</sup>, only a few explicit comments on Bourdieu's work can be traced in Habermas's writings<sup>4</sup>.
8. Bourdieu's explicit comments on Habermas's work are unambiguously negative, critical, and on some occasions even cynical in nature; on all occasions, Bourdieu categorically disagrees with, distances himself from, and attacks Habermas; there is no single explicit statement that would suggest a substantial point of agreement or convergence.<sup>5</sup>
9. One of Habermas's few explicit references to Bourdieu's work, published shortly after the latter's death, stands out due to its moderate, sympathetic, and affectionate tone.<sup>6</sup> In the context of an obituary, this lack of critical engagement with Bourdieu's work is understandable. Yet, the striking absence of any critical reference whatsoever to the theoretical contribution of Bourdieu's work seems to indicate Habermas's relative indifference towards, if not ignorance of, Bourdieu's work.

10. (a) Despite the significant influence of German and French social thought on the international debates in philosophy and sociology, (b) despite the fact that drawing systematic comparisons between 'great social thinkers' is standard practice in social theory, and (c) despite the fact that Habermas is frequently celebrated as the most eminent contemporary German social philosopher and Bourdieu as the most influential French sociologist of the late twentieth century, Habermasian critical theory and Bourdieusian reflexive sociology have never been systematically cross-fertilised.

In short, there seem to be ten straightforward and obvious reasons to believe that any attempt to integrate Habermasian with Bourdieusian social theory will be fraught with challenges. Here it shall be argued, however, that, despite the substantial differences that exist between Habermasian and Bourdieusian social theory, the two approaches share some significant theoretical concerns and can be fruitfully integrated. The analysis will seek to show that both the similarities and the differences between the two approaches allow us to cross-fertilise them and thereby overcome some of their most fundamental shortcomings.

### ***i) Affinities and Commonalities: Normative Unities***

Habermasian critical theory and Bourdieusian reflexive sociology share some significant theoretical preoccupations. No attempt shall be made here to account for all similarities between the two approaches; instead, this section focuses on those points of convergence that are particularly relevant to the theorisation of the social. The following significant theoretical affinities can be identified.

#### *(1) The Concepts of 'Kritik' and 'Réflexivité'*

Again, we start with critique and reflexivity. Just as the concept of *critique* constitutes the epistemological starting point of Habermasian critical theory, the concept of *reflexivity* constitutes the epistemological starting point of Bourdieusian reflexive sociology. Both critique and reflexivity are regarded as ambivalent affairs. On the one hand, they allow us to face up to our unavoidable embeddedness *in* society. On the

other hand, they enable us to go *beyond* our embeddedness in society by problematising—that is, critiquing and reflecting upon—our situatedness in the social world. In other words, our structural immanence stems from our inevitable situatedness in society, and our reflective transcendence is rooted in our capacity to problematise this very situatedness. Thus, a thorough critique of society must imply self-critique because the critic is inevitably immersed in society; and a comprehensive reflection upon society must imply self-reflection because the sociological analysis *of* the social world is structurally dependent upon the sociologist's position *in* the social world. Both critique and reflexivity are regarded as empowering sources because they enable us to question, uncover, and understand the constitution *of* the social world by taking into account our embeddedness *in* the social world. The first point of convergence between Habermas and Bourdieu is their point of departure: the enabling power of critique and reflexivity is expressed in our capacity to turn our inescapable immersion in the social world into an object of contemplation.<sup>7</sup>

(2) *The Concepts of 'Gesellschaft' and 'Société'*

Both Habermas and Bourdieu are concerned with the study of the social world. To the extent that the former emphasises the *intersubjective* nature of human existence, the latter insists upon the *relational* nature of any human form of life. Intersubjectivity and relationality constitute the *sine qua non* of the human being-in-the-world: to acknowledge that we exist by existing with one another means to recognise that we unavoidably exist in relation to one another. Only by comprehending the ways in which human existence is socially—i.e. intersubjectively and relationally—structured can we understand the human condition. Any phenomenon whose existence is, at least partly, due to the structural relation *between* subjects can and must be regarded as social. The preponderance of the social is nothing but the preponderance of human interdependence. Whether it is by virtue of our communicative competence or by virtue of our habitus, we can only cope with the world by existing within and in relation to society. The second point of convergence between Habermas and Bourdieu is to be found in their analytical focus: both conceive of the nature of human existence in terms of human coexistence.<sup>8</sup>

(3) *The Concepts of 'Praxis' and 'Pratique'*

Both Habermas and Bourdieu insist upon the essentially *practical* nature of human life. Their recognition of the practical nature of human life contains three main assumptions. First, *social life as such is essentially practical*. Both the Habermasian insistence upon our unavoidable engagement in 'communicative action' and the Bourdieusian emphasis upon the 'logic of practice' highlight that we coexist by practically relating to one another. Second, *our ability to cope with life is essentially practical*. Both the Habermasian conception of communicative competence as an 'interactive competence' and the Bourdieusian notion of the habitus as a '*sens pratique*' suggest that our engagement with the world is an engagement with and through human praxis. Third, *our ability to understand life is essentially practical*. Both the Habermasian contention that 'reason is not a free-floating process'<sup>9</sup> and the Bourdieusian attack on 'the illusion [...] of "the detached and rootless intelligence"'<sup>10</sup> draw attention to our practical immersion in reality, implying that even the seemingly most detached sphere of human existence, human reason, is deeply attached to the social context in which it is born, human praxis. The third point of convergence between Habermas and Bourdieu is their insistence upon human praxis: our immersion in, our engagement with, and our understanding of the world cannot escape their derivation from human praxis.<sup>11</sup>

(4) *The Concepts of 'Interesse' and 'Intérêt'*

Both Habermas and Bourdieu stress the *interest-laden* nature of the human social. In accordance with the practical nature of human life, its interest-laden nature needs to be uncovered on three levels. First, *social life as such is essentially interest-laden*. Both the Habermasian account of the human interest in social integration, as opposed to the systemic interest in functional integration, and the Bourdieusian account of the field-specific interests that are pursued by field-embedded actors make clear that we coexist as interested entities guided, consciously or unconsciously, by the interest in the reproduction of our environment. Second, *our ability to cope with life is essentially interest-laden*. Both the early Habermasian conception of the three knowledge-constitutive human interests in controlling, comprehending, and critiquing the world and the Bourdieusian conception of our interest in developing

a predispositional capacity oriented towards the homological compliance with our social environment imply that our engagement with the world is an engagement that is permeated by structurally conditioned interests. Third, *our ability to reflect upon life is essentially interest-laden*, that is, our *Lebensanschauung* is rooted in our *Lebensinteresse*. Habermas believes that the 'analysis of the connection of knowledge and interest should support the assertion that a radical critique of knowledge is possible only as social theory'<sup>12</sup>. In a similar vein, Bourdieu is convinced that 'epistemological critique is inconceivable without social critique'<sup>13</sup>. Thus, both Habermas and Bourdieu contend that the unavoidable value-ladenness of knowledge stems from the value-ladenness of the interest structure in which human knowledge is produced. The fourth point of convergence between Habermas and Bourdieu is their interest in human interest: our immersion in, our engagement with, and our reflection upon the world are impregnated with structurally conditioned interests.<sup>14</sup>

(5) *The Concepts of 'Kritische Theorie' and 'Sociologie Réflexive'*

Both Habermas and Bourdieu emphasise the importance of the *critical* and *reflexive* study of the social world.<sup>15</sup> Inasmuch as critical theory defines itself in opposition to supposedly 'uncritical' or 'traditional' theory, reflexive sociology defines itself in opposition to supposedly 'unreflexive' or 'scholastic' thought. Based on this programmatic opposition, the projects of critical theory and reflexive sociology share three constitutive tasks. First, both seek to *reflect* upon themselves, acknowledging that the most critical critic is unavoidably immersed in the social world just as the most reflexive sociologist is necessarily conditioned by his or her positionally structured and structuring place in the social universe (*self-reflective task*). Second, both seek to *uncover* the underlying driving forces and interests that govern and permeate the social world (*uncovering task*). And, third, both seek to *envisage* the structural conditions that are necessary for the construction and realisation of a society beyond domination (*emancipatory task*). The fifth point of convergence between Habermas and Bourdieu is expressed in their insistence upon the self-reflective, uncovering, and emancipatory tasks of their projects.<sup>16</sup>

(6) *The Concepts of 'Aporien' and 'Antinomies'*

Both Habermas and Bourdieu aim to overcome the alleged pitfalls and contradictions of *one-sided approaches* to the social. Essentially, Habermasian social theory seeks to unveil and transcend three crucial forms of reductionism in social thought: first, the productivist, instrumentalist, and positivist reductionism allegedly inherent in the *Marxian* paradigm of labour; second, the fatalistic pessimism putatively inherent in the paradigm of instrumental reason embraced by *early critical theory*; and, third, the linguistic idealism purportedly inherent in the paradigm of language put forward by *philosophical hermeneutics*. In a similar vein, Bourdieusian social theory seeks to identify and surmount three main forms of reductionism in social thought: first, the *objectivist* reductionism presumably inherent in structuralist, determinist, and substantialist approaches to the social; second, the *subjectivist* reductionism supposedly inherent in voluntarist, rationalist, and phenomenologist approaches to the social; and, third, the *scholastic* reductionism ostensibly inherent in the self-sufficient celebration of the paradigm of reason.

Furthermore, Habermasian and Bourdieusian social theory coincide in that both seek to overcome the division between subjectivist and internalist<sup>17</sup> approaches, on the one hand, and objectivist and externalist<sup>18</sup> approaches, on the other. In Habermasian terms: 'The *fundamental* problem of social theory is how to connect in a satisfactory way the two conceptual strategies indicated by the notions of "system" and "lifeworld".'<sup>19</sup> In Bourdieusian terms: 'Of all the oppositions that artificially divide social science, the most *fundamental*, and the most ruinous, is the one that is set up between subjectivism and objectivism.'<sup>20</sup> Insofar as the Habermasian architecture of the social consists essentially of the lifeworld and the system, it seeks to reconcile phenomenological hermeneutics with systems-theoretic functionalism, suggesting that the social world is permeated by both ordinary signifiability and systemic functionality. Insofar as the Bourdieusian architecture of the social is essentially composed of the field and the habitus, it aims to demonstrate the inescapable interpenetration of objectivity and subjectivity, accounting for the subjectivised nature of objectivity and the objectivised nature of subjectivity. The sixth point of convergence between Habermas and Bourdieu is reflected in their ambition to overcome the reductionism



inherent in one-sided approaches to the social: both seek to do justice to the complexity of human coexistence, rejecting the reduction of the social to only one, monolithically hypostatised, dimension.<sup>21</sup>

(7) *The Concepts of 'Sprache' and 'Langue'*

Both Habermas and Bourdieu consider *language* to be of paramount importance in social life. To be more precise, both emphasise five fundamental features of language. First, since both consider language to be the product of the dialectical relationship between our linguistic competence and our linguistic environment, both stress the *competence-based and environment-based* nature of language. Second, since both consider language to be the product of the interdependent relationship between our linguistic competence and our linguistic practices, both emphasise the *competence-based and performance-based* nature of language. Third, since both consider language to be a constitutive component of social reality, both insist upon the *social embeddedness* of language, thereby opposing any form of 'hermeneutic idealism'<sup>22</sup> or "pure" linguistics<sup>23</sup>. Fourth, since both consider social reality to be permeated by power relations, both regard language to be impregnated with these *power relations*. Fifth, since both consider language to be a medium of communication, both view language as a *recognitive force of intersubjective relationality*. The seventh point of convergence between Habermas and Bourdieu is their preoccupation with the linguistically mediated nature of social life: both acknowledge that language is produced referentially, performatively, socially, functionally, and recognitively.<sup>24</sup>

(8) *The Concepts of 'Hintergrund' and 'l'Inconscient'*

Both Habermas and Bourdieu emphasise the significance of our necessary reliance upon a social and cultural *background*, which allows for the very possibility of social order. There is no social foreground without a social background; there is no social stage without a social backstage; there is no here without a behind; and there is no now without an always already. Habermas reminds us of the power of our 'implicitly present discursive shadow theatre'<sup>25</sup>, which 'conveys the feeling of absolute certainty only because we do not know about it'<sup>26</sup>. Similarly, Bourdieu points out that 'what is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying: the tradition is silent, not least about itself as

a tradition'<sup>27</sup>. Critical social science is 'a science of the unconscious'<sup>28</sup> in that it is aimed at the critical study of 'the universe of presuppositions'<sup>29</sup> in which ordinary actors are immersed in their everyday lives. Yet, both Habermas and Bourdieu also draw upon the pragmatist insight that our unproblematic, implicit, and unquestioned background *can* be converted into a problematised, explicit, and questioned foreground, notably in situations of crisis or in situations of confrontation with the unexpected.<sup>30</sup> Paradoxically, the primacy of the background is not undermined but reaffirmed in situations of crisis, for every crisis can, at most, lead to the creation of a new, rearticulated, but equally powerful background. The eighth point of convergence between Habermas and Bourdieu is their acknowledgement of the infrastructural, presuppositional, and habitual nature of the social.<sup>31</sup>

(9) *The Concepts of 'Macht' and 'Pouvoir'*

Both Habermas and Bourdieu seek to uncover the ways in which social relations are permeated by *power relations*. Their respective conceptions of power concur on five main levels. First, both stand within the Marxist tradition of social thought in that they seek to unveil the *conflictual* nature of the social. Second, both seek to go beyond the Marxist tradition of social thought by emphasising the *multilayered*, rather than monolithic, nature of power relations. Third, both regard *strategic* action as the epitome of power-driven social action, which is ultimately oriented towards success and therefore towards the quest for power. Fourth, both analyse the structural impact of power relations upon, and their mediation through, *symbolic* relations between meaning-reciprocating subjects. Finally, both conceive of power relations in terms of the link between the *systemic* macrostructures of society and the *ordinary* microstructures of social life. The ninth point of convergence between Habermas and Bourdieu can be found in their conceptions of social power: both consider power relations to be conflictually articulated, polycentrically spread, strategically maintained, symbolically mediated, and systemically consolidated.<sup>32</sup>

(10) *The Concepts of 'Emanzipation' and 'Émancipation'*

Both Habermas and Bourdieu claim to be committed to the *emancipation* of the human condition. More concretely speaking, their respective

conceptions of human emancipation coincide in three respects. First, since power mechanisms largely operate behind the backs of subjects and since the complex structures of power relations can hardly be observed, but tend to be reproduced by ordinary actors, both regard the systematic attempt to *uncover* the underlying structures from which power relations are derived as the first step towards human emancipation. Second, since relations of power are reproduced and maintained precisely because they serve the particular interests of social groups whose interest-laden existence is due to the asymmetrical structuration of society, both conceive of emancipation in *universalistic*—i.e. structure-transcendent—terms. For to emancipate humanity means, in Habermas's words, to pursue the universal 'human interest in autonomy and responsibility'<sup>33</sup> and, in Bourdieu's words, to 'universalise the conditions of access to universality'<sup>34</sup>. Third, both hold that the ultimate empowering source that allows us to control and steer the organisation of the social world according to universalisable, rather than particular, interests is the unifying force of human reason. Hence, both stand in line with the modernist project of the *Enlightenment*, urging us to acknowledge the emancipatory potential of a 'situated reason'<sup>35</sup> and to embark upon a '*Realpolitik* of reason'<sup>36</sup>. This contrasts with any relativistic—notably postmodern and culturalistic—attempts to reduce emancipation to an arbitrary, ephemeral, and group-specific language-game. The tenth point of convergence between Habermas and Bourdieu manifests itself in their conceptions of social emancipation: both conceive of emancipation as an uncovering project that breaks with common sense, as a universal project that transcends particular social interests, and as a rational project that resists postmodern relativism.<sup>37</sup>

### ***ii) Differences and Discrepancies: Normative Oppositions***

Habermasian critical theory and Bourdieusian reflexive sociology diverge in ten substantial respects. Ironically, their ten most crucial points of convergence represent at the same time their ten most crucial points of divergence. Again, no attempt shall be made here to elucidate all the differences between the two approaches; rather, this section centres on those points of divergence that are particularly relevant to the

theorisation of the social. The following significant theoretical discrepancies can be identified.

(1) *The Concepts of 'Kritik' and 'Réflexivité'*

Inasmuch as Habermas and Bourdieu converge in identifying the epistemological starting point of their approaches with the cognitive exercise of critical reflection, they diverge in terms of the normative grounds that they seek to provide for critique and reflexivity.

First, whereas Habermas conceives of critique as a *human privilege*, Bourdieu regards reflexivity as a *scientific privilege*. According to the former, critical competence constitutes a species-specific capacity, enabling every subject immersed in ordinary speech and action to interpret and shape the social world. According to the latter, reflexivity describes a science-specific capacity, allowing every sociologist distanced from ordinary speech and action to deconstruct and demystify the social world.

Second, whereas Habermas insists upon the *discursive and consensus-oriented nature* of critique, Bourdieu emphasises the *doxa-deconstructive and consensus-undermining nature* of reflexivity. According to the former, critique is built into the very structure of everyday speech and, therefore, derived from ordinary understanding. According to the latter, reflexivity is built into the very structure of science and, consequently, categorically distrustful of ordinary understanding.

The first point of divergence between Habermas and Bourdieu is to be found in their diametrically opposed conceptions of critique and reflexivity. From a Habermasian perspective, critical capacity constitutes a universal competence that is built into ordinary speech. From a Bourdieusian perspective, reflexive capacity represents a professional competence that is built into critical social science.

(2) *The Concepts of 'Gesellschaft' and 'Société'*

Even though Habermas and Bourdieu coincide in their efforts to emphasise the coexistential nature of the human condition, they differ fundamentally in terms of their respective *conceptions of the social*. The insight *that* the human condition is largely determined by its social nature may be hard to refute; the question of *what* the social nature of the human condition exactly consists of, however, is precisely one main source of division in the social sciences. The controversy over the nature

of human coexistence could hardly be more significant: to analyse how we coexist is to examine the nature of society. In other words, the question to be confronted is what the constitutive features of the social are. Habermasian thought and Bourdieusian thought are divided by this question in five crucial and closely interrelated respects.

First, according to the Habermasian perspective, the ontological foundation of the social is to be located in *communicative action*. According to the Bourdieusian perspective, on the other hand, the ontological foundation of the social is to be located in *homological action*. According to the former, social action is ultimately derived from its communicative orientation towards reaching understanding. According to the latter, social action is ultimately derived from its strategic orientation towards reaching power. Hence, whereas the cornerstone of the Habermasian ontology of social action is communicatively achieved cooperation, the cornerstone of the Bourdieusian ontology of social action is strategically motivated competition.

Second, in the Habermasian framework, social relations are primarily conceived of as *normative relations*. In the Bourdieusian framework, by contrast, social relations are primarily conceived of as *power relations*. In the former case, social relations are essentially shaped by our discursive capacity to understand the world by understanding one another through the intersubjective articulation of criticisable validity claims. In the latter case, social relations are fundamentally determined by our homological capacity to cope with the world by pursuing our field-specific interests through the unconscious exchange of legitimisable power claims. Thus, whereas the cornerstone of the Habermasian ontology of social relations is the communicatively motivated forceless force of the better argument, which allows subjects to relate to one another in an open and opening space of reasons (*Raum der Gründe*), the cornerstone of the Bourdieusian ontology of social relations is the strategically motivated forceful force of the most legitimate force, which compels subjects to relate to one another in a delimited and delimiting space of possibilities (*espace des possibles*).

Third, since, in the Habermasian universe, ordinary social actors are equipped with the *communicative competence* to raise validity claims, they are taken seriously as cognitively and morally responsible actors whose relative autonomy is rooted in their ability to guide their actions by

virtue of their judgmental capacity. Since, in the Bourdieusian universe, ordinary social actors are equipped with the *homological competence*<sup>38</sup> to construct their subjectivity in relation to their social environment, they are regarded as corporeally and unconsciously compliant actors whose relative heteronomy is rooted in their tendency to perform their actions in accordance with their field-specific habitus. In other words, whereas the cornerstone of the Habermasian ontology of the human subject is our communicative competence to understand the world by understanding other human subjects, the cornerstone of the Bourdieusian ontology of the human subject is our homological competence to cope with the world by positioning ourselves in relation to other human subjects.

Fourth, according to Habermasian parameters, the constitution of the social is primarily shaped by our most crucial *species-unifying capacity*: the empowering force of communicative competence. According to Bourdieusian parameters, the constitution of the social is primarily shaped by our *species-dividing conditions*: the constraining force of social structures. In the light of the former, the social derives its horizontal nature from the empowering potential inherent in our communicative competence. In the light of the latter, the social derives its vertical nature from the social structures in which our competences are embedded. Following the former, our interactive capacities enable us to move *beyond* the structural divisions of society. Following the latter, our interactive capacities are unavoidably permeated by the structural divisions of society. Thus, whereas the Habermasian ontology of human coexistence insists upon the empowering force of communicative competence, the Bourdieusian ontology of human coexistence focuses upon the constraining force of social structure.

Fifth, the Habermasian architecture of the social consists essentially of the ineluctable interrelation between *lifeworld and system*. The Bourdieusian architecture of the social, on the other hand, is composed of the intimate interrelation between *field and habitus*. Within the theoretical framework of the former, the ontological infrastructure of the social is to be located in the lifeworld. Within the theoretical framework of the latter, the ontological infrastructure of the social is to be located in the field. According to the former, the conflictual nature of the social is rooted in the gradual uncoupling of lifeworld and system. According to the latter, the conflictual nature of the social is built into the structure of

fields. In the former scenario, the colonising penetration of the lifeworld by the system is both historical and detrimental, rather than ontological and categorical. In the latter scenario, the preponderant penetration of the habitus by the field is both ontological and categorical, rather than historical and detrimental. In short, whereas the Habermasian ontology of social order is founded on the relationship between lifeworld and system, the Bourdieusian ontology of social order is based on the relationship between field and habitus.

The second point of divergence between Habermas and Bourdieu lies in their fundamentally different conceptions of the social. Habermas conceives of the social primarily in communicative, normative, discursive, consensual, and emancipatory terms. By contrast, Bourdieu perceives the social primarily in homological, conflictual, relational, structural, and reproductive terms.

(3) *The Concepts of 'Praxis' and 'Pratique'*

At the same time as Habermas and Bourdieu converge in insisting upon the essentially practical nature of our immersion in, engagement with, and understanding of the world, their conceptions of human practice diverge in two respects.

First, their respective conceptions of human practice are *methodologically different*. Habermas's writings contain very few concrete and practical examples<sup>39</sup> and are, apart from occasional references to empirical studies carried out by other natural and social scientists<sup>40</sup>, characterised by a considerable lack of empirical substantiation. Bourdieu's writings, by contrast, are not only informed by a large variety of concrete and practical examples<sup>41</sup>, but they are also inspired by the anti-scholastic conviction that the study of the social can only be seriously undertaken on the basis of both theoretical reflection *and* empirical research if it seeks to be more than a provocative exercise of intellectual thought experiments: 'research without theory is blind, and theory without research is empty.'<sup>42</sup> As a *Geisteswissenschaftler* by training and a *Gesellschaftsphilosoph* by choice<sup>43</sup>, Habermas advocates a 'philosophy of praxis'; as a *philosophe* by training and a *sociologue* by choice<sup>44</sup>, Bourdieu makes a case for a 'sociology of praxis'.

Second, their respective conceptions of human practice are *ontologically different*. From a Habermasian perspective, our communicative

competence is essentially practical; it is conceived as an empowering source of an intersubjectively produced human consciousness. Hence, as communicative actors we are not only practically immersed, but also practically aware and therefore *practically reflective* social actors able to raise, redeem, and criticise validity claims. From a Bourdieusian perspective, on the other hand, our habitus—or *sens pratique*—constitutes an empowering source of a collectively produced, but individually internalised unconscious. Thus, as homological actors we are not only practically immersed, but also practically largely unaware and therefore *practically unreflective* social actors prone to reproduce, accept, and subscribe to the field-specific imperatives inherent in a structurally divided social universe.

The third point of divergence between Habermas and Bourdieu is to be found in their diametrically opposed conceptions of human practice. According to the Habermasian philosophy of praxis, we are practically conscious and communicatively reflective social actors. According to the Bourdieusian sociology of praxis, we are practically unconscious and largely unreflective social actors.

(4) *The Concepts of 'Interesse' and 'Intérêt'*

Habermas and Bourdieu converge in focusing upon the interest-laden nature of our immersion in, engagement with, and reflection upon the world. Nonetheless, their conceptions of interest also diverge precisely in these three respects.

First, both conceive of *social life as essentially interest-laden*. Yet, whereas Habermas conceives of interests in *anthropological* terms, Bourdieu conceives of interests in *sociological* terms. According to the former, human interests are, first and foremost, species-universal interests: our three knowledge-constitutive interests in controlling, comprehending, and critiquing the world are rooted in the lifeworld of any society *beyond* its historical and cultural specificity and *regardless of* its internal structural divisions. According to the latter, human interests are, above all, species-dividing interests: our social interests in coping with and taking advantage of the world are derived from our field-determined situatedness *within* the social space and pursued *in accordance with* the relationally defined position that each of us occupies within it.



Second, both conceive of *our ability to cope with life as essentially interest-laden*. Yet, whereas Habermas conceives of our interest-laden ability in *communicative* terms, Bourdieu conceives of it in *strategic* terms. According to the former, human interests are shaped by our communicative interest in learning to control, comprehend, and critique the world by *understanding* one another; hence the preponderance of intelligibility as the most fundamental validity claim raised in every speech act. According to the latter, human interests are shaped by our strategic interest in seeking to comply with and reproduce field-divided worlds by *competing* with one another; hence the preponderance of legitimacy as the most decisive power claim raised in every social act.

Third, both conceive of *our ability to reflect upon life as essentially interest-laden*. Yet, whereas Habermas conceives of our interest-laden view of the world in *discursive* terms, Bourdieu conceives of it in *homological* terms. According to the former, our interest-laden view of the world is produced by the unavoidable reliance upon discursively raised validity claims *beyond* our structurally defined position in society. According to the latter, our interest-laden view of the world is formed by the unconscious reproduction of homologically raised legitimacy claims *depending on* our structurally defined position in the social space.

The fourth point of divergence between Habermas and Bourdieu is to be found in their diametrically opposed conceptions of human interest. From a Habermasian perspective, we are able to pursue species-universal interests that are communicatively discovered and discursively negotiated. From a Bourdieusian perspective, on the other hand, we are compelled to pursue species-dividing interests that are structurally determined and homologically constituted.

(5) *The Concepts of 'Kritische Theorie' and 'Sociologie Réflexive'*

Habermas and Bourdieu converge in the emphasis they place on the self-reflective, uncovering, and emancipatory tasks of their projects. Yet, their conceptions of the critical study of the social are also worlds apart.

First, whereas the self-reflective, uncovering, and emancipatory tasks of Habermasian critical theory are thought to be derived from the *ordinary social* itself, Bourdieusian reflexive sociology makes these tasks the exclusive privilege of *critical social scientists*.

Second, whereas the former is based on a thorough *theoretical* exploration of the foundations of the social, the latter is committed to the categorical interdependence of *theoretical and empirical* research.<sup>45</sup>

Third, whereas the former asserts that the ‘task of universal pragmatics is to identify and reconstruct *universal* conditions of possible understanding’<sup>46</sup>, taking note of the fact that ‘anyone acting communicatively must, in performing any speech action, raise *universal* validity claims’<sup>47</sup>, the latter affirms that ‘praxeology is a universal anthropology that takes into account [...] the historicity, and therefore the *relativity*, of cognitive structures, taking note of the fact that social actors make universal use of *historical* structures’.<sup>48</sup>

The fifth point of divergence between Habermas and Bourdieu is to be found in the differing nature of their projects. The former derives the normative foundations of critique from the theoretical reconstruction of the universal features of ordinary linguistic communication. By contrast, the latter derives the normative foundations of reflexivity from a theoretically and empirically informed social science able to uncover the historically contingent structures of cognition.

(6) *The Concepts of ‘Aporien’ and ‘Antinomies’*

Habermas and Bourdieu converge in that they both oppose the reductionism inherent in one-sided approaches to the social. Nevertheless, it is contentious whether or not their own approaches can escape the charge of reductionism.

From a Bourdieusian perspective, Habermasian social theory tends to overstate the significance of our communicative competence at the expense of the structural and objective social conditions in which our interactive competences are embedded and through which they can be acquired in the first place. Hence, from a Bourdieusian point of view, the aporetic nature of Habermasian thought derives from its contradictory assertion to overcome the subject-object antinomy<sup>49</sup> while actually advocating a *scholastic, subject-based, and transcendentalist* account of the social.

From a Habermasian perspective, on the other hand, Bourdieusian social theory tends to overemphasise the power of the external structural conditions of the human social at the expense of our meaning-

producing and autonomy-donating communicative competence. Thus, from a Habermasian point of view, the aporetic nature of Bourdieusian thought is rooted in its contradictory assertion to overcome the subject-object antinomy<sup>50</sup> while in fact putting forward a *functionalist, objectivist, and structuralist* account of the social.

The sixth point of divergence between Habermas and Bourdieu is rooted in their programmatic opposition. From a Bourdieusian point of view, a communication-theoretic conception of the social is caught up in philosophical idealism because it prioritises our communicative *competence* to account for the nature of the social. From a Habermasian point of view, a homological conception of the social falls into the trap of sociological determinism because it overestimates the power of external structural *conditions* to account for the nature of the social.

(7) *The Concepts of 'Sprache' and 'Langue'*

Habermas and Bourdieu converge in acknowledging that language is produced referentially, performatively, socially, functionally, and recognitively. They also differ, however, as to how the production of language is to be theoretically interpreted.

First, in Habermas's view, our environment *stimulates* our linguistic competence; in Bourdieu's view, our environment *determines* our linguistic competence.

Second, in Habermas's view, our linguistic performances *activate* our linguistic competence; in Bourdieu's view, our linguistic performances *cultivate* our linguistic competence.

Third, in Habermas's view, the validity-based and understanding-oriented structure of ordinary speech reflects the *quasi-transcendental* nature of language; in Bourdieu's view, the capital-based and field-oriented structure of symbolically laden speech reflects the *homological* nature of language.

Fourth, in Habermas's view, linguistic communication is only contextually asymmetrical but *inherently symmetrical*, for linguistic competence constitutes a human and, therefore, universal competence; in Bourdieu's view, linguistic communication is *predominantly asymmetrical* but only exceptionally symmetrical, for linguistic competence constitutes a socially determined and, therefore, unequally distributed competence.

Fifth, in Habermas's view, the recognitive nature of language is based on its inherent orientation towards reaching *consensus-based acceptability*, thereby forming the nucleus of our communicatively acquired critical capacity and anticipating the utopia of a discursively achieved universal *Mündigkeit*; in Bourdieu's view, the recognitive nature of language is based on its socially determined orientation towards reaching *authority-based legitimacy*, thereby forming the nucleus of our asymmetrically structured linguistic habitus and confirming the reality of a socially determined field-particular *doxa*.

The seventh point of divergence between Habermas and Bourdieu is reflected in their differing conceptions of language. Habermas conceives of language as a universal, creative, rational, critical, and consensual force of social emancipation. By contrast, Bourdieu regards language as a contingent, reproductive, symbolic, arbitrary, and legitimising medium of social distinction.

(8) *The Concepts of 'Hintergrund' and 'l'Inconscient'*

Habermas and Bourdieu converge in emphasising the importance of a shared, implicit, and unquestioned social and cultural background, which allows for the very possibility of human coexistence. At the same time, they diverge in terms of the power they ascribe to the infrastructural, presuppositional, and habitual nature of the social. Although they agree that, notably in situations of crisis, the unproblematic, implicit, and unquestioned background *can* be converted into a problematised, explicit, and questioned foreground, they differ in terms of their respective conceptions of crisis.

From a Habermasian perspective, crises cannot only be *understood* by discursively competent social actors, but they can actually be *brought about* by discourses of social actors. Hence, every time we question or challenge a validity claim raised by another social actor, we run the *species-enriching* risk of causing a discursively triggered crisis of acceptability: what may be considered acceptable in one discourse may be considered unacceptable in another discourse. In the long term, the forceless force of the better argument will determine the forceful validity of the most justifiable background.

From a Bourdieusian perspective, crises are brought about not by communicatively constituted discourses, but, most importantly, by a

*structural disruption* of the *homological correspondence* between field and habitus. Hence, every time we move in a field whose structures do not correspond to the structures of our habitus, we run the *doxa-undermining* risk of becoming immersed in a structurally determined crisis of legitimacy: what may be considered legitimate in one field may be considered illegitimate in another field. In the long term, the forceful force of the most legitimate force will determine the forceful authority of the most legitimate background.

The eighth point of divergence between Habermas and Bourdieu is reflected in their differing conceptions of background. According to the former, the long-term stability of every background depends on its discursively tested acceptability. According to the latter, the long-term stability of every background depends on its field-specifically determined legitimacy.

(9) *The Concepts of 'Macht' and 'Pouvoir'*

Habermas and Bourdieu converge in that they consider power relations to be conflictually articulated, polycentrically spread, strategically maintained, symbolically mediated, and systemically consolidated. Nonetheless, they also diverge in these five respects.

First, in Habermas's view, the main source of conflict in modern society is the *colonisation* of the communicatively structured lifeworld by the functionally structured system. In Bourdieu's view, the main source of conflict in modern society is the contestability of social fields, that is, both the *internal contestability of fields*, in which social groups and actors are positionally situated and constantly compete over power and access to capital, and the *external contestability between fields*, which compete over the quest for the microcosmic hegemony in the hierarchically structured social macrocosm.

Second, in Habermas's view, the multilayered constitution of power is essentially derived from the two main components of the system, the *state* and the *economy*, and the corresponding omnipenetration of society by functionalist rationality. In Bourdieu's view, the multilayered constitution of power is due to the *plurality of fields* and their corresponding multiple production of simultaneously existing types of capital.

Third, Habermas's 'anthropological optimism' is based on the assumption that strategic action represents a *parasitic* derivative of

communicative action. Bourdieu's 'anthropological pessimism' is founded on the presupposition that strategic action describes the *prototypical* representative of social action.

Fourth, according to Habermas's 'universal pragmatics', even language that is permeated by power can ultimately bypass power by virtue of the *power-transcending* force of rationally motivated validity claims. According to Bourdieu's 'genetic structuralism', even language that seeks to bypass power can ultimately only reaffirm the presence of power due to the *power-ubiquitous* force of relationally determined legitimacy claims.

Fifth, according to Habermas's 'socio-ontological idealism', power relations are rooted in the *systemic* realm, which is driven by functionalist rationality, rather than in the lifeworld, which is shaped by communicative rationality. According to Bourdieu's 'socio-ontological fatalism', power relations are produced through the *homological* interplay between social fields, which are permeated by strategic rationality, and the habitus, which is characterised by the compliant disposition to reproduce the rationality of its corresponding social field.

The ninth point of divergence between Habermas and Bourdieu is reflected in their differing conceptions of power. Whereas Habermas conceives of power primarily in systems-theoretic terms, Bourdieu conceives of power primarily in field-theoretic terms.

#### (10) *The Concepts of 'Emanzipation' and 'Émancipation'*

While Habermas and Bourdieu converge in their interpretation of emancipation as an uncovering, universal, and rational project, they diverge in the same three respects.

First, from a Habermasian perspective, the capacity to uncover the underlying structures from which power relations are derived is regarded not as an exclusive privilege of critical theorists but as built into the very structure of *ordinary* language and, therefore, as discursively accomplishable by ordinary social actors. From a Bourdieusian perspective, this uncovering capacity is considered to be a privilege of reflexive sociologists and built into the very structure of critical social *science*, which is not reflexively attainable by ordinary social actors, who are caught up in the doxic imperatives of a naïve understanding of the world based on common sense.

Second, in Habermas's view, the universality of human emancipation is built into the structure of ordinary speech in that the counterfactual reality of utopia is anticipated by the *unavoidable teleology of language*: our linguistic orientation towards mutual understanding reflects our existential orientation towards human cooperation. In Bourdieu's view, the universality of human emancipation is built into the structure of reflexive sociology in that the counterfactual reality of utopia can be anticipated by the *critical normativity of sociology*: its reflexive orientation towards scientific uncovering, vigilant self-objectification, and categorical questioning reveals its normative orientation towards human liberation.

Third, according to Habermas's communication-theoretic rationalism, rationality anticipates utopia because its communicative nature *transcends* socially constructed boundaries; that is, human emancipation is built into the *species-unifying* nature of communicative reason. According to Bourdieu's praxeological rationalism, rationality *can*, but by no means *must*, anticipate utopia because its historical nature is unavoidably *embedded* in socially constructed boundaries; that is, human emancipation can be endorsed by the *historically contingent* force of human reason.

The tenth point of divergence between Habermas and Bourdieu is reflected in their differing conceptions of emancipation. According to the former, emancipation is built into the discursive capacity of ordinary speakers, into the cooperative teleology of ordinary existence, and into the communicative transcendentality of ordinary reason. According to the latter, emancipation is, at most, a potential inscribed in the explorative capacity of science, in the enlightening normativity of reflexive sociology, and in the unavoidable historicity of human reason.

### **iii) Aporias and Insights: Normative Integrations**

Although both Habermasian critical theory and Bourdieusian reflexive sociology seek to overcome the shortcomings and aporias inherent in one-sided approaches to the social, they contain some significant shortcomings and aporias themselves. The limited explanatory power of *any* theoretical framework that seeks to give a coherent account of the social is indicative of the constitutive complexity of the social. The more

complex the nature of the social, the more controversial the conceptual tools with which we seek to grasp the nature of the social will turn out to be. Conceptual tools may allow us to simplify the social, but they do not allow us to make the social any simpler. Critical theory and reflexive sociology are not absolved from the contestability of human thought; on the contrary, their contestability is reflected in the fact that their accounts of the social contain some serious shortcomings. Yet, falling short does not mean falling apart. Here, it will be shown that some of the most crucial shortcomings of the two approaches can be overcome by cross-fertilising them.

Rather than simply recapitulating the shortcomings of Habermasian critical theory and Bourdieusian reflexive sociology which have been examined in the fourth and eighth chapter of this book, this section focuses on those shortcomings which (a) undermine the validity of the Habermasian or the Bourdieusian approach to the social in a fundamental sense, (b) can be overcome by cross-fertilising the two approaches, and (c) need careful consideration for the proposal of a tentative outline of an alternative approach to the social. To this end, the following fundamental, surmountable, and reconstructable shortcomings can be identified.

(1) *The Reality of Rationality—The Reality of the Habitus*

To the extent that one of the key strengths of Habermasian thought derives from the power it ascribes to communicative rationality, which allows for the very possibility of social order, one of its key weaknesses is expressed in its systematic underestimation of the non-rational features of human coexistence. Yet, our communicative competence to control, comprehend, and critique the world by virtue of rationality is indivisible from our homological competence to perceive, appreciate, and act upon the world by virtue of our habitus. In other words, the anthropological power of communicative rationality does not do away with, but is inseparably linked to the sociological power of the habitus.

Both rationality and habitus are fundamental to the constitution of the human social. Our *sens rationnel* and our *sens pratique* do not necessarily exclude one another; on the contrary, human subjectivity is composed of both rational and non-rational elements, both of which are fundamental to the constitution of human coexistence in at least four respects.



First, the fact that we are rational entities does not contradict the fact that we are habit-driven entities. As contemplative entities, we are able to reflect upon and call into question what we may usually take for granted. As habitual entities, we take for granted what we may occasionally reflect upon and call into question. Our critical reflexivity is embedded in the uncritical habituality that governs our everyday lives.

Second, the fact that we are rational entities does not contradict the fact that we are praxis-driven entities. Our actions can be guided by 'theoretical reason', which is based on the critical reflection upon the world; and our actions can also be, and are predominantly, guided by 'practical reason', which allows us to cope with our direct involvement in the world. Our discursively constituted 'know-that' is situated in our practically constituted 'know-how'.

Third, the fact that we are rational entities does not contradict the fact that we are corporeal entities. The richness of our experience of the world is only partly due to our rational capacity to attach linguistically articulated meaning to this experience. Instead of reducing human subjectivity to a quasi-disembodied state of discursive rationality, a critical social theory must also account for the intuitive, instinctual, and sensual corporeality which permeates ordinary people's interactions in their everyday lives. Our rationally guided contemplativeness is located in our bodily guided intuitiveness.

Finally, the fact that we are rational entities does not contradict the fact that we are interest-driven entities. The universality of our knowledge-constitutive interests in controlling, comprehending, and critiquing the world lies at the heart of the species-specific background in which we have learned to use the power of rationality in order to situate ourselves in the world. The particularity of our knowledge-homological interests in reproducing, protecting, and cultivating the world to which we belong and with which we tend to comply constitutes the field-specific background in which we have learned to use the power of our habitus in order to position ourselves in the social space. Paradoxically, we are driven by both species-specific and field-specific interests.

The first insight to be gained from the cross-fertilisation of Habermasian and Bourdieusian thought is that our communicative rationality is embedded in the habitual, practical, corporeal, and homological nature of our habitus.

*(2) The Reality of Validity—The Reality of Legitimacy*

To the extent that one of the key strengths of Habermasian thought derives from the power it ascribes to validity, which allows for the possibility of a discursively mediated form of coexistence, one of its key weaknesses is its systematic underestimation of legitimacy, which determines the nature of a hierarchically mediated form of coexistence. Yet, our communicative competence to raise validity claims cannot be divorced from our field-specific disposition to raise legitimacy claims. In other words, the communicative power of validity does not bypass, but is impregnated with the social power of legitimacy.

To recognise that validity is nothing without legitimacy means to acknowledge the contingency of validity in at least three respects. (a) What may be considered valid in one social context may be considered invalid in another social context. Different fields represent different ensembles of structures with different codes of legitimacy. Thus, validity is contextually contingent. (b) What may be considered valid if articulated by one actor may be considered invalid if articulated by another actor. Different positions in society represent different sources of authority with different resources of legitimacy. Hence, validity is positionally contingent. (c) What may be considered valid by one actor may be considered invalid by another actor. Different forms of habitus represent different ensembles of interiorised structures with different schemes of legitimacy. Therefore, validity is dispositionally contingent.

The second insight to be gained from the cross-fertilisation of Habermasian and Bourdieusian thought is that the constative, normative, and expressive power of validity is always dependent upon the contextually, positionally, and dispositionally contingent power of legitimacy.

*(3) The Reality of Competence—The Reality of Conditionality*

To the extent that one of the key strengths of Habermasian thought derives from the power it ascribes to our interactive competence, notably our communicative competence, one of its key weaknesses is rooted in its neglectful underestimation of the power of the structural conditions in which our social competences are developed, notably our differentially structured environment. Yet, our socio-ontological competence to communicate with others is not only triggered and activated,

but also shaped and cultivated by the socio-ontological conditions in which we learn how to relate to the world. In other words, the power of our communicative competence does not transcend, but depends upon the power of the communicative conditions under which the former is allowed to develop in the first place.

To be competent means to have become competent. The recognition of the structural interdependence between our communicative competence and the communicative conditions by which we are surrounded is based on three main insights.

First, our communicative competence is both *activated and cultivated* by our linguistic environment. It needs to be activated by our linguistic environment because no interactive competence can develop without social interaction: a speaker needs a speech community. It is cultivated by our linguistic environment because our interactive competences are structured by the environment with which we interact: a speaker is educated by a speech community.

Second, our communicative competence is both *transcendentally and homologically oriented* towards our linguistic environment. Our transcendental orientation towards our linguistic environment manifests itself in our existential dependence on mutual understanding: there is no social order without social coordination. Our homological orientation towards our linguistic environment is due to our existential dependence on social integration: there is no social field without social reproduction.

Third, our communicative competence is both *symmetrically and asymmetrically distributed*. As a human capacity, it allows us to situate ourselves in the world as discursively competent beings; as a dispositional capacity, it compels us to position ourselves within our linguistic environment as socially divided beings.

The third insight to be gained from the cross-fertilisation of Habermasian and Bourdieusian thought is that our socio-ontological competences are at the same time activated and cultivated by, transcendently and homologically oriented towards, and symmetrically and asymmetrically distributed within our social environment. Put another way, the power of competence cannot substitute for the power of conditionality, and the power of conditionality cannot substitute for the power of competence.

(4) *The Reality of Transcendentality—The Reality of Relationality*

To the extent that one of the key strengths of Habermasian thought derives from the power it ascribes to the transcendental features of the human social, notably its communicative nature, one of its key weaknesses is expressed in its systematic underestimation of the structural features of the human social, notably its relational nature. Yet, the transcendental constitution of a linguistically coordinated form of coexistence is unavoidably embedded in the relational constitution of a positionally divided society. In other words, the power of the transcendental features of human communication does not rise above, but moves within the power of the relational features of human coexistence, within which the coordinative force of communicative action can unfold in the first place.

To be unavoidably communicative means to be unavoidably relational. Communicative actors are situated in a relationally constructed social space. The relational immanence of communicative transcendence manifests itself both in the interest and in the orientation of communicative action. First, our *universal interest* in controlling, comprehending, and critiquing the world by communicating with one another is permeated by our *particular interest* in controlling, comprehending, and critiquing the world in accordance with our structurally defined position in the social space. Our schizophrenic interest in both the species and the field expresses our contradictory interest in preserving ourselves both as members of a species and as members of a social field. Second, our *universal orientation* towards understanding one another through linguistic communication is impregnated with our *particular orientation* towards competing with one another in accordance with our structurally determined interests in the social space. The transcendental teleology inherent in human communication reveals that our need for consensus stems from our dependence on social coordination. The relational teleology inherent in social structuration reveals that our need for capital stems from our dependence on social differentiation.

The only way in which we could reconcile our existential interests and existential orientation as human beings, on the one hand, with our social interests and social orientation as field-embedded actors, on the other, would be by defining the field of social actors as the field of humanity. Regardless of whether or not this is possible, the reality of transcendentality will always depend on the reality of relationality.

The fourth insight to be gained from the cross-fertilisation of Habermasian and Bourdieusian thought is that the transcendental power inherent in human cooperation is ineluctably pervaded by the relational power inherent in human coexistence.

(5) *The Reality of Communicative Action—The Reality of Strategic Action*

To the extent that one of the key strengths of Habermasian thought derives from the power it ascribes to communicative action, notably its fundamental role in the consolidation of social order, one of its key weaknesses is based on its systematic underestimation of strategic action, notably its contribution to the constitution of social order. Yet, our communicative orientation towards reaching intelligibility goes hand in hand with our strategic orientation towards reaching utility. In other words, the coordinative-rational power inherent in communicative action does not take precedence over, but is always already permeated by the purposive-rational power inherent in strategic action.

The telos of mutual intelligibility coexists with the telos of mutual utility. The interpenetrative constitution of communicative and strategic action reflects the ambivalent nature of social action and compels us to overcome three forms of idealism inherent in Habermas's communication-theoretic approach to the social: socio-ontological optimism, socio-ontological utopianism, and socio-ontological romanticism.

First, the problem inherent in socio-ontological optimism consists in the fact that it presupposes, rather than proves, the prototypical, preponderant, and primary status of communicative action and the parasitic, peripheral, and derivative status of strategic action. Our inescapable field-based immersion in the world, however, binds the coordinative-rational power inherent in communicative action to the purposive-rational power inherent in strategic action. Our orientation towards intelligibility is derived from our interest in and dependence on cooperation as a species; our orientation towards utility is derived from our interest in and dependence on social structuration as field-embedded actors. As communicative and strategic actors we have both a universal *Weltinteresse* and particular *Feldinteressen*.

Second, the problem inherent in socio-ontological utopianism consists in the fact that it comfortably relies upon the alleged predominance of communicative rationality for the construction of an alternative

society beyond systematic distortion and systemic domination. The power of the ideal speech situation, however, always depends on the power of the real speech situation. Utopia that grants itself the certainty of its own reality is both unrealistic and potentially repressive; utopia that faces up to the uncertainty of its own reality is both viable and potentially emancipatory. We cannot simply assume that the social is on our side by presuming that its communicative nature is preponderant. If both communicative action and strategic action inhabit the social as the two motivational cornerstones of human action, strategic action can be challenged and counterbalanced by, but not derived and deduced from communicative action.

Third, the problem inherent in socio-ontological romanticism consists in the fact that it portrays the lifeworld as a powerfree realm of pristine intersubjectivity, interpreting power as a lifeworld-exogenous and system-endogenous mechanism and thereby relegating the ultimate source of power to the systemic sphere, rather than the lifeworld itself. Since all lifeworld-embedded actors are at the same time field-embedded actors, however, the lifeworld is always already permeated by power relations. There are no social actors without social structures; there is no ordinary intersubjectivity without positionally structured relationality. Whether it is class, ethnicity, gender, age, or ability which defines our relationally contingent position in the social space, the most innocent form of lifeworld-subjectivity cannot transcend its structural dependence on field-positionality. Social action, whether communicative or strategic, needs to be understood in relation to social structure.

The fifth insight to be gained from the cross-fertilisation of Habermasian and Bourdieusian thought is that we need to overcome a naively optimistic, comfortably utopian, and seductively romantic view of the social by recognising that the foundational, omnipresent, and ordinary power of communicative action goes hand in hand with the foundational, omnipresent, and ordinary power of strategic action.

*(6) The Reality of Scientific Competence—The Reality of Communicative Competence*

To the extent that one of the key strengths of Bourdieusian thought derives from the power it ascribes to sociology as a reflexively scientific discipline capable of undertaking a radical break with both the ordinary

and the scholastic vision of the world, one of its key weaknesses stems from its systematic underestimation of our communicative competence, thereby undervaluing our hermeneutic capacity to reflect upon and make sense of our lives by virtue of ordinary language. Yet, the sociologist's scientific competence to produce knowledge *about* the social world emanates from people's ordinary competence to produce knowledge about themselves *within* the social world, and both forms of competence are communicatively acquired. In other words, the enlightening power of a reflexive social science does not obliterate, but derives from the communicative power of ordinary people.

Reflexive sociology defines itself as (a) a project of science, (b) a project of vigilance, and (c) a project of distance. As a project of science, it enables us to uncover the underlying mechanisms of the social. As a project of vigilance, it allows us to objectify the process of objectification itself. As a project of distance, it obliges us to undertake the simultaneous epistemological break with the ordinary and the scholastic vision of the world. In a similar vein, our communicative competence allows us to distinguish ourselves from other beings as (a) self-interpretive entities, (b) self-vigilant entities, and (c) self-critical entities. As self-interpretive entities, we are able to produce insightful knowledge about our lives. As self-vigilant entities, we are able to contemplate ourselves. As self-critical entities, we are able to distance ourselves from ourselves. In short, to acknowledge that both scientific and ordinary reflexivity have emerged out of linguistic communication is to recognise that reflexivity exists because of, rather than despite, our communicative competence.

The sixth insight to be gained from the cross-fertilisation of Habermasian and Bourdieusian thought is that the uncovering, self-objectifying, and distancing power of reflexive sociology is rooted in the self-interpretive, self-vigilant, and self-critical power of reflexive social actors.

(7) *The Reality of Homology—The Reality of Communicative Autonomy*  
To the extent that one of the key strengths of Bourdieusian thought derives from the power it ascribes to the structural homology—understood as ‘a genuine ontological complicity’<sup>51</sup>—between habitus and field, which permeates social reality, one of its key weaknesses manifests itself in its underestimation of actors’ communicative autonomy, which

enables them to transcend their field-specific immanence discursively. Yet, the structural homology that situates our subjectivity *within* the objectivity that surrounds us cannot do away with the communicative autonomy that situates our subjectivity *beyond* the objectivity that surrounds us. In other words, the structural power of the socio-ontological homology that impregnates human existence does not eliminate, but conditions the power of communicative autonomy.

To be sure, our species-specific capacity to autonomise ourselves by virtue of our communicatively acquired ability to establish a discursively mediated relation to the world is substantially conditioned by our position in the social space; that is, our communicative autonomy is both species-specific and habitus-specific. As a species-specific capacity, communicative autonomy allows any subject *capable* of speech and action, *regardless* of its structurally determined situatedness in the social space, to elevate itself above nature by raising world-related validity claims. As a habitus-specific capacity, communicative autonomy allows any subject *equipped* with the capital-specific tools for speech and action, *depending* on its structurally determined situatedness in the social space, to place itself in society by raising field-related legitimacy claims. Having said that, the point to be emphasised is that species-specificity and habitus-specificity include, rather than exclude, one another: our linguistic competence depends on our linguistic capital just as much as our linguistic capital depends on our linguistic competence. To humanise the reality of structural homology means to socialise the reality of communicative autonomy. A homological account of the social must face up to the power of both the object *and* the subject.

The seventh insight to be gained from the cross-fertilisation of Habermasian and Bourdieusian thought is that the structurally determining power of homology cannot annihilate, but is always potentially challenged by the subject's intersubjectively acquired power of communicative autonomy.

(8) *The Reality of the Field—The Reality of the Lifeworld*

To the extent that one of the key strengths of Bourdieusian thought derives from the power it ascribes to the field, which constitutes the ontological 'base' of the Bourdieusian architecture of the social, one of its key weaknesses is expressed not only in its neglectful underestimation,



but also, more radically, in its categorical degradation of the lifeworld<sup>52</sup>, which represents the ontological 'base' of the Habermasian architecture of the social. Yet, the relational grounds of the field are permeated by the ordinary grounds of the lifeworld. In other words, the omnipresence of the field does not contradict, but complements the omnipresence of the lifeworld.

First, their omnipresence is due to their *foundational* status. According to Bourdieu, social order can only emerge as the homological interplay between a positionally structured space of field-divided objectivity and a dispositionally structured apparatus of habitus-specific subjectivity. According to Habermas, social order can only emerge as the dialectical interplay between a communicatively structured space of ordinary intersubjectivity, the lifeworld, and a functionally structured realm of organisational differentiality, the system.

Second, their omnipresence is due to their *determining* status. According to Bourdieu, who and what we are is determined by our field-specific attachment to the world. According to Habermas, who and what we are is determined by our ordinary attachment to the lifeworld.

Third, their omnipresence is due to their *paradigmatic* status. According to Bourdieu, we are strategic entities compelled to pursue our particular interests in accordance with the field-specific positions that we occupy in a hierarchically structured social space. According to Habermas, we are communicative entities compelled to pursue our universal interest in coordinating our actions in our linguistically structured lifeworld, allowing us to consolidate a social space in the first place.

Instead of degrading the lifeworld to a normativistic metaphor of phenomenologically inspired thought experiments and instead of reducing society to a relationally differentiated conglomerate of social fields, a field-theoretic view of the social needs to be complemented with a lifeworld-theoretic view of the social for three main reasons. First, field-specific relationality is unthinkable without ordinary relationality; our position in the world is nothing without our situatedness in the lifeworld. Second, every field-specific actor is an ordinary actor; our social capital is nothing without our socialisation in the lifeworld. Third, field-specific strategic action is unthinkable without ordinary communicative action; our capacity to compete is nothing without our capacity to coordinate.

The eighth insight to be gained from the cross-fertilisation of Habermasian and Bourdieusian thought is that the integration of a lifeworld-theoretic approach with a field-theoretic approach to the social allows us to acknowledge that field-specific relationality presupposes ordinary relationality, that field-specific actors are always already ordinary actors, and that the force of strategic action would be forceless without the force of communicative action.

*(9) The Reality of Structure-Specificity—The Reality of Species-Specificity*

To the extent that one of the key strengths of Bourdieusian thought derives from the power it ascribes to the structure-specific constitution of social reality, one of its key weaknesses is its failure to take into account the species-specific constitution of social reality. Yet, the idiosyncrasy of social structures is rooted in the idiosyncrasy of the human species. In other words, the structure-specific differentiability of the human social is not separated from, but intimately intertwined with the existential peculiarity of the human species.

First, human *subjectivity* is constituted by both the specificity of social structures and the specificity of our species. Given that our subject-constitutive dispositions always depend on our subject-constitutive positions in society, our subjectivity is the interiorised outcome of a structurally differentiated exterior objectivity. Given that our subject-constitutive dispositions always depend on our subject-constitutive competences, our subjectivity is the evolutionary outcome of our own condition as a human species. One pivotal species-specific feature of human subjectivity is our ability to attach meaning to the world by virtue of the signifying force of language: our encounter with the world (*Weltbegegnung*) strives for our interpretation of the world (*Weltdeutung*). How we interpret the world is substantially conditioned by our position in the world as social actors: our *Weltanschauung* is necessarily a form of *Feldanschauung*. That we interpret the world is due to our place in the world as human beings: our *Weltinterpretation*<sup>53</sup> stems from our *Bedeutungsbedürfnis*<sup>54</sup>. A critical social theory must seek to explore the anthropological specificity of social subjectivity if it aims to do justice to the emancipatory potentials inherent in the human subject.

Second, human *objectivity* is constituted by both the specificity of social structures and the specificity of the species. The objectivity of human coexistence is composed of social structures, which are both structured and structuring: as structured structures, they are determined by the interactions between subjects; as structuring structures, they determine the interactions between subjects. Yet, the dialectical nature of social structures does not reveal anything about the specificity of human social life, if one takes into account that animals also develop structured and structuring structures which regulate their coexistence. One pivotal species-specific feature of human objectivity is our need to regulate the world by virtue of the coordinative and, unlike animals, criticisable force of linguistically raised validity claims: our structuration of the world (*Weltstrukturierung*) is motivated by our need to normalise the world (*Weltnormativierung*). *How* we normalise the world is substantially conditioned by our position in the world as social actors: our *Weltnormativität* is necessarily a form of *Feldnormativität*. *That* we normalise the world is due to our place in the world as human beings: our *Weltnormativierung*<sup>55</sup> is rooted in our *Geltungsbedürfnis*<sup>56</sup>. A critical social theory must seek to explore the anthropological specificity of social objectivity if it aims to do justice to the emancipatory potentials inherent in human society.

The ninth insight to be gained from the cross-fertilisation of Habermasian and Bourdieusian thought is that the power of structure reflects not only the power of society, but also the power of the species.

(10) *The Reality of Strategic Action—The Reality of Communicative Action*  
To the extent that one of the key strengths of Bourdieusian thought derives from its forceful conception of strategic action, particularly with regard to its power to permeate social action, one of its key weaknesses is based on its neglectful underestimation of communicative action, particularly with regard to its power to coordinate social action. Yet, our strategic orientation aimed at utility and power goes hand in hand with our communicative orientation aimed at intelligibility and consensus. In other words, the purposive-rational power inherent in strategic action does not take precedence over, but is always already permeated by the coordinative-rational power inherent in communicative action.

The telos of mutual utility coexists with the telos of mutual intelligibility. Insofar as strategic action and communicative action interpenetrate one another, they go necessarily together. The purpose of mutual utilisation and instrumentalisation does not exclude, but depends upon the purpose of mutual understanding and coordination. Paradoxically, strategic action and communicative action describe not only two contradictory and rival forces, but also two complementary and constitutive elements of social relations. In brief, social relations stand or fall due to their degree of functionality *and* intelligibility. The recognition of the coexistential relationship between strategic action and communicative action obliges us to overcome three forms of fatalism inherent in the Bourdieusian approach to the social: socio-ontological pessimism, socio-ontological defeatism, and socio-ontological nihilism.

First, the problem inherent in socio-ontological pessimism is that it tends to identify *rapports sociaux* exclusively with *rapports de force*, thereby downplaying the fact that *rapports sociaux* are also *rapports normatifs* derived from the need for communicatively achieved cooperation. Social order would unavoidably collapse if it were based exclusively on strategic action; no social order can emerge without the coordinative force inherent in communicative action because, as interdependent beings, we rely on the normative invariants of human coexistence, such as mutual understanding, trust, and cooperation. This is not to suggest that social order is not also permeated by various forms of strategic action, but to acknowledge that no strategy can do without a minimum of communicatively achieved normativity.

Second, the problem inherent in socio-ontological defeatism is that it converts utopia into a pointless project, implying that ordinary social relations are ontologically predetermined to be only doxic and strategic, rather than also discursive and communicative. If the utopia of society is converted into the utopia of science, then the possibility of social emancipation is relegated to the power of scientists, rather than ordinary people. If, on the other hand, the utopia of society is located in society itself, then the possibility of social emancipation depends on the power of ordinary people, rather than scientists. This is not to deny that social order needs to rely on subjects' capacity to interact with one another on the basis of largely unconscious and taken-for-granted background assumptions characteristic of a tem-

porally and spatially specific social setting; rather, this is to recognise that ordinary people also possess the communicatively attained self-enlightening capacity to bring their naively accepted background to the foreground and to challenge the power of their communicatively presupposed *inconscient ordinaire* (ordinary unconscious) by the power of their communicatively articulated *Umgangsaufklärung* (ordinary enlightenment).

Third, the problem inherent in socio-ontological nihilism is that it supposes that the *force du sujet* is always less powerful than the *rapports de force*, thereby negating the socialising, practical, and ontological force of critical capacity and affirming the totalising, transcendental, and homological force of power. To overcome both the socio-ontological romanticism inherent in Habermasian thought and the socio-ontological nihilism inherent in Bourdieusian thought requires acknowledging the contradictory and rival, but simultaneous and equally fundamental existence of the power-laden and the power-critical constitution of the ordinary social. The *force du social* depends on both the *rapports de force* and the *force de la critique*.

The tenth insight to be gained from the cross-fertilisation of Habermasian and Bourdieusian thought is that we need to overcome an overly pessimistic, pointlessly defeatist, and cynically nihilistic view of the social by recognising that the foundational, omnipresent, and ordinary power of strategic action goes hand in hand with the foundational, omnipresent, and ordinary power of communicative action.

## Notes

1. See, for example: Beer 1999; Crossley 2004; Maesschalck 2001; Poupeau 2000; Sintomer 1999a.

2. For cursory but instructive comparisons between Jürgen Habermas and Pierre Bourdieu, see, for example: Aboulafia 1999, pp. 157 and 164; Bidet 1996, p. 137; Bohman 1989, pp. 385, 388, 389, and 392; Bohman 1991, pp. 158 and 163–164; Bohman 1997, pp. 177–180; Bohman 1999a, pp. 132, 137, 139–140, 150n.9, 151n.21, and 152n.25; Bohn 1991, pp. 13–14n.1; Bouchindhomme 1996, p. 149; Bouveresse 2003, p. 120; Calhoun 1995b, pp. 134–147, 154, and 160 n.71; Callinicos 2006, pp. 53, 80, 156, and 217; Cicourel 1993, pp. 100–101; Cronin 1996, pp. 74 and 84n.48; Dortier 2002b, p. 55; Dreyfus and Rabinow 1999, p. 84; Eickelpasch 2002, p. 59; Erickson 2004, p. 128; Foster 2005, pp. 89, 98, and 104; Gunn 2005, p. 51; Harrington 2001, p. 120; Hong 1999, p. 253; Honneth 2004, p. 348; Kieserling 2000, p. 36; Kögler 1997b, p. 225; Krämer 2002, pp. 104–110; Lash 1993, p. 202; LiPuma 1993, p. 23; Margolis 1999, p. 76; McNay 2003, p. 1; Miallet 2003, p. 616; Moss 2005, p. 23; Mounier 2001, p. 173; Myles 2004, p. 103; Noya 2003, p. 50; Papilloud 2003, p. 108; Pels 1995, pp. 92, 95, and 98; Pinto 1998, p. 11; Robbins 2000, pp. 18 and

125–126; Robbins 2002, pp. 305–306; Sandywell 1996, p. 398; Sidel 2001; Sintomer 1996, p. 102; Sintomer 2005, p. 292; Strydom 2006, pp. 168–169n.1; Swartz 1997, pp. 252–253, 255n.20, 271, and 286; Thompson 1992, pp. 10 and 31; Vandenberghe 2003, pp. 301–302; Vázquez García 1999, pp. 208–211; Vázquez García 2002, pp. 196–197; Wacquant 1992e, p. 47; Wacquant 1993, pp. 237, 242–243, 245, and 247.

3. See, for example: Bourdieu 1979a, p. 581n.34; Bourdieu 1982e, p. 25n.4; Bourdieu 1982f, p. 60 (with regard to this passage it should be noted that Bourdieu does not explicitly mention but only alludes to Habermas's universal pragmatics: '[...] il est rare que, dans l'existence ordinaire, la langue fonctionne comme pur instrument de communication [...]'); Bourdieu 1982g, p. 105; Bourdieu 1982h, pp. 192–194; Bourdieu 1987, pp. 30 and 36 (alluding to the Frankfurt School and Habermas's work); Bourdieu 1988, pp. 40n.55, 101n.1, and 110n.18; Bourdieu 2002 [1992/1993], pp. 271–272; Bourdieu 1993a, p. 210; Bourdieu 1994a, pp. 165, 170–171, and 235–236; Bourdieu 1995a, p. 10; Bourdieu 1995b, p. 114; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 32, 80, 81, 95, 99, 128, 131, 143, 145, 292n.13, 296n.8, 296–297n.9, and 297n.10; Bourdieu 1997b, p. 60; Bourdieu 1999, p. 338; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 10, 48, 161–162, 167, and 200; Bourdieu 2002a, pp. 4 and 7 [this article contains a few subtle and implicit, but unambiguous and pertinent allusions to Habermas's work; see, for example: 'la "force intrinsèque des idées vraies"' (p. 4) and 'les conditions sociales d'un *dialogue rationnel*' (p. 7) (italics in original)]; Bourdieu 2004b, p. 13; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 139; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992e, pp. 147, 154n.109, and 156; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992f, pp. 188–189.

4. See, for example: Habermas 1986, p. 151; Habermas 2002a. [See also Habermas 2002b.]

5. Having said that, on a few occasions Bourdieu refers to Habermas in a technical, rather than critical, manner. See, for example: Bourdieu 1988, pp. 40n.55, 101n.1, and 110n.18; Bourdieu 1993a, p. 210; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 32 and 292n.13.

6. See Habermas 2002a.

7. On the Habermasian notion of critique, see, for example: Habermas 1988 [1963]-a, pp. 213–214, 219, 238–240, and 246–249; Habermas 1988 [1963]-b, esp. pp. 256–263, 279, and 281; Habermas 1987 [1981]-d, pp. 118–121 and 134; Habermas 1987 [1981]-k, p. 195; Habermas 2001, pp. 23–29; Müller-Dooohm 2000.

On the Bourdieusian notion of reflexivity, see, for example: Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 30, 40, 43, and 51–70; Bourdieu 1982a, pp. 8–11, 23–24, 29, 32, and 54; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-a, pp. 9–14; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-c; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 12–13, 28–29, 43, 113, 140, and 158; Bourdieu 2001b, pp. 7, 20, 30, and 57; Bourdieu 2001c, esp. pp. 15–20, 154, and 167–220; Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron 1968, pp. 14, 23, 31, 39, 46, 57, 62, 96, and 100–102; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, esp. pp. 68–73; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 127; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992g, p. 214; Engler and Zimmermann 2002; Wacquant 1992d, pp. 36–42 and 46; Wacquant 2004.

8. On the Habermasian notion of intersubjectivity, see, for example: Habermas 1987 [1968]-e, pp. 140–147 and 154–160; Habermas 1987 [1981]-c, pp. 85–86 and 100–101; Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, pp. 279–280; Habermas 2000b, pp. 563–564; Habermas 2000c, pp. 324, 329, and 337; Habermas 2001, pp. 7–13, 23–25, 29–33, 39, 48, and 69–76.

On the Bourdieusian notion of relationality, see, for example: Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 12–13, 139–140, 151, and 229; Bourdieu 1984b, p. 4; Bourdieu 1992, p. 232; Bourdieu 1994a, pp. 17 and 20; Bourdieu 1997a, p. 220; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 119, 146, 154–157, and 163; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, p. 97.

9. Habermas 2000b, p. 553 (my translation). On the Habermasian notion of a 'social, situated, and detranscendentalised reason', see also, for example: Habermas 1987 [1985]-d, pp. 303–304; Habermas 1999; Habermas 2001.

10. Bourdieu 1982a, p. 23 (my translation). On the Bourdieusian notion of a 'social, situated, and detranscendentalised reason', see also, for example: Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 43–244 ('*Livre 1—Critique de la Raison Théorique*'); Bourdieu 1994a; Bourdieu 1997a.

11. On the Habermasian notion of praxis, see, for example: Habermas 1988 [1971], pp. 1–3 and 16–19; Habermas 2000b, p. 553; Habermas 2001, esp. pp. 8–11, 17, 26, 44, 50, 54, and 71–72.

On the Bourdieusian notion of praxis, see, for example: Bourdieu 1977 [1972]; Bourdieu 1980a; Bourdieu 1994a, esp. pp. 169–173; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 64, 66, 68, 75–76, 80, 97–98, 115, and 164–165; Bourdieu 2001c, p. 78; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, pp. 119–121; Wacquant 1992c, esp. pp. 22–23.

12. Habermas 1987 [1968]-k, p. vii (already quoted above).

13. Bourdieu 1982a, p. 10 (my translation). See also Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 11–12.

14. On the Habermasian notion of interest, see, for example: Habermas 1988 [1963]-b, pp. 253–257 and 264–276; Habermas 1987 [1965/1968], esp. pp. 308–317; Habermas 1987 [1968]-k, esp. p. vii; Habermas 1987 [1968]-a, esp. pp. 3–5; Habermas 1987 [1968]-c, pp. 44–45, 56, and 63; Habermas 1987 [1968]-d, p. 69; Habermas 1987 [1968]-f, esp. p. 189; Habermas 1987 [1968]-g, esp. pp. 191 and 196–213; Habermas 1988 [1971], pp. 8–9; Habermas 1987 [1972], esp. pp. 352–358 and 370–371; Habermas 2000a; Giegel 2000; Thyen 2000.

On the Bourdieusian notion of interest, see, for example: Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-a, pp. 9–14; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-b, esp. pp. 37–38; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-c, esp. pp. 49–51 and 53; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 11, 21, 84, 91, 113, 124, 126, 148, 168, 188, 199, 233–234, 252, and 254; Bourdieu 2001b, p. 14; Bourdieu 2001c, esp. pp. 5–10 and 19; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, esp. pp. 115–117 and 124–125; Castel 2003, p. 353; Lahire 1999a, p. 15.

15. It should be noted that Bourdieu characterises his approach as both a *sociologie réflexive* and an *anthropologie réflexive*. See, for example, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992a.

He also characterises his approach as a *sociologie critique*. See, for example, Bourdieu 1978, p. 68.

16. On the Habermasian notion of critical theory, see, for example: Habermas 1988 [1971], pp. 7–16 and 28–32; Habermas 1987 [1981]-p; Habermas 2001 [1984]-e, p. 103; Habermas 1987 [1985]-c, esp. pp. 116–130.

On the Bourdieusian notion of reflexive sociology (and the Bourdieusian notions of reflexive anthropology and critical sociology), see, for example: Bourdieu 1978, p. 68; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-a; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-c; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-d; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, pp. 71–72; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992g, pp. 212–215; Wacquant 1992d, esp. pp. 36–40.

17. Internalist approaches to the social seek to analyse the social world primarily from the ‘internal’ perspective of social subjectivity, that is, from the perspective of social actors, who are regarded as meaning-producing entities equipped with the hermeneutic capacity to make sense of their lives by virtue of their consciousness. Cf. Habermas 1987 [1981]-j.

18. Externalist approaches to the social seek to analyse the social world primarily from the ‘external’ perspective of social objectivity, that is, from the perspective of social systems, which are regarded as functional conglomerates of social structures characterised by the power to determine people’s lives beyond their consciousness. Cf. Habermas 1987 [1981]-l.

19. Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, p. 151 (italics added).

20. Bourdieu 1990 [1980], p. 25 (italics added) (already quoted above).

21. On the Habermasian notion of aporias, see, for example: Habermas 1987 [1985]-b (on Marxism); Habermas 1987 [1985]-c (on early critical theory); Habermas 1988 [1967/1970]-b (on philosophical hermeneutics); Habermas 1987 [1981]-j (on lifeworld-theoretic idealism); Habermas 1987 [1981]-l (on systems-theoretic functionalism); Habermas 2001 [1984]-a (on both objectivism and subjectivism).

On the Bourdieusian notion of antinomies, see, for example: Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 43, 46, 78, 87, 103, 178, 202, 234, and 242; Bourdieu 1982a, pp. 35–37; Bourdieu 1994b, p. 3; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 16–17, 43, 77, 122, 157, 159–160, 163–167, 185, and 225; Bourdieu 2002b, p. 353;



Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron 1968, pp. 34, 93–94, and 101; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, p. 66.

22. See Habermas 1988 [1967/1970]-a, esp. p. 132; and Habermas 1988 [1967/1970]-b, esp. pp. 166–170 (already referred to above). See also Habermas 1988 [1967/1970]-a, p. 119 (already referred to above).

23. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992e, p. 141. See also Bourdieu 1982f, p. 72.

24. On the Habermasian notion of language, see, for example: Habermas 1988 [1967/1970]-a; Habermas 1970b; Habermas 1984 [1976]-a; Habermas 1987 [1981]-d; Habermas 1987 [1981]-h; Habermas 1987 [1981]-i; Habermas 1987 [1981]-j; Habermas 1990 [1983]-c; Habermas 1985 [1984]; Habermas 2001 [1984]-b; Habermas 2001 [1984]-c; Habermas 2001 [1984]-d; Habermas 2001 [1984]-e; Habermas 2001 [1984]-f; Habermas 1992 [1988]-c; Habermas 2000c; Cooke 1994; Lafont 1999 [1993], esp. pp. 119–360; Steinhoff 2001.

On the Bourdieusian notion of language, see, for example: Bourdieu 1977b; Bourdieu 1992 [1977]; Bourdieu 1982c; Bourdieu 1982d; Bourdieu 1982e; Bourdieu 1982f; Bourdieu 1982g; Bourdieu 1982h; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-f; Bourdieu and Boltanski 1975; Bourdieu and Delsaut 1975, p. 23; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992e; Calvet 2002; Encrevé 2004; Gebauer 2005; Hanks 1993; Jenkins 1994; Ledeneva 1994; Searle 2004; Snook 1990.

25. Habermas 2001, p. 78 (my translation).

26. Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, p. 135 (italics removed from ‘about’).

27. Bourdieu 1977 [1972], p. 167 (italics removed from ‘goes without saying because it comes without saying’) (already quoted above). See also Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 9: ‘It is because we are *implicated* in the world that there is *implicit* content in what we think and say about it.’ (Italics added.)

28. Bourdieu 1982a, p. 10 (my translation).

29. *Ibid.*

30. See, for example: Habermas 1987 [1981]-d, pp. 130–131; Habermas 1992 [1988]-d, pp. 173–174; Habermas 2001, p. 31; Bourdieu 1977 [1972], pp. 168–169; Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 154n.11, 201, 269, and 318n.32; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 131.

31. On the Habermasian notion of background (and the Habermasian notion of taken-for-grantedness), see, for example: Habermas 1987 [1972], p. 363; Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, pp. 124–125 and 132–135; Habermas 2001, p. 78.

On the Bourdieusian notion of background (and the Bourdieusian notion of the unconscious), see, for example: Bourdieu 1977 [1972], p. 167; Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 113, 179, 188, 200, and 244; Bourdieu 1982a, pp. 10 and 34; Bourdieu 1992, p. 225; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 21–26, 44–46, 64–67, 118, 120, 123, 181, 184, and 206; Bourdieu 1998b, p. 89; Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron 1968, pp. 30, 38, 46–47, 56, 58, 70, 77, 101, and 105; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992e, pp. 143–144; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992g, p. 213.

32. On the Habermasian notion of power (and the Habermasian notion of domination), see, for example: Habermas 1988 [1967/1970]-c, p. 172; Habermas 1970b, p. 374; Habermas 1988 [1971], pp. 16 and 24; Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, pp. 332–333; Habermas 1987 [1981]-j, pp. 134 and 148; Habermas 1987 [1981]-k, esp. pp. 160 and 168; Habermas 1987 [1981]-n, pp. 312, 323, and 328–331; Habermas 1987 [1981]-o, esp. pp. 332–343; Habermas 1987 [1981]-p, pp. 374–376 and 385–390; Habermas 2001 [1984]-e, pp. 97–99 and 102; Habermas 2001 [1984]-g; Habermas 2000a, pp. 15 and 18; Crossley 2004, pp. 89 and 109; Kögler 1996 [1992], pp. 73–77.

On the Bourdieusian notion of power (and the Bourdieusian notion of domination), see, for example: Bourdieu 1976b; Bourdieu 1992 [1977]; Bourdieu 1982a, pp. 7, 14, 16, 17, 19, 23, 25, and 56; Bourdieu 1982d, pp. 14–16 and 21; Bourdieu 1982e; Bourdieu 1982f; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-a, p. 12; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]-f, pp. 81–84; Bourdieu 1992, pp. 229–230; Bourdieu 1994b; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 9, 47, 81, 99, 116, 124–127, 132, 200–206, 211–212, 214, 222, 225, 236, 243–244, 256–258, 280–281, 284–285, and 287; Bourdieu 1998b; Bourdieu 2001c, pp. 47, 54, 150, and 170; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, p. 112; Kögler 1996 [1992], pp. 220–233; Poupeau 2000; Sintomer 1999a; Wacquant 1992b, esp. pp. 14–15.



33. Habermas 1987 [1965/1968], p. 311 (already quoted above). See also Habermas 2000b, pp. 555–556: ‘Verallgemeinerbare Normen verdienen Anerkennung, weil sie im gemeinsamen Interesse aller liegen oder gleichermaßen gut sind für jeden.’ (Italics in original.)

In the secondary literature see, for example, Finlayson 2000.

34. Bourdieu 1994a, p. 233 (my translation). See also Bourdieu 2002a, p. 7: ‘La *Realpolitik* de la raison que je ne cesse de défendre doit donc se donner le projet de travailler à créer les conditions sociales d’un *dialogue rationnel*.’ (Italics in original.)

In the secondary literature see, for example, Foster 2005, pp. 98–99.

35. Habermas 2001, p. 8 (my translation).

36. Bourdieu 2001b, p. 32 (my translation).

37. On the Habermasian notion of emancipation, see, for example: Habermas 1987 [1965/1968], pp. 310–317; Habermas 1987 [1968]–g, pp. 197–198 and 205–212; Habermas 1988 [1971], pp. 2 and 9; Habermas 1987 [1972], pp. 370–371; Habermas 2001 [1984]–e, pp. 85–86; Habermas 1987 [1985]–a; Habermas 1987 [1985]–c, pp. 107–110, 113–114, 116, 126–127, and 130; Habermas 1987 [1985]–d, esp. pp. 294–295, 301–305, 308, 314–316, 322, and 325–326; Habermas 1998, pp. 419, 422, and 452; Habermas 2000a, pp. 14, 17, and 20; Habermas 2000c, p. 328; Habermas 2001, pp. 28–29, 37, 45–47, and 83–84; Davey 1985, pp. 113–114 and 120; Pels 1995, pp. 91–95.

On the Bourdieusian notion of emancipation, see, for example: Bourdieu 1982a, p. 32; Bourdieu 1993 [1984]–a, p. 17; Bourdieu 1994a, pp. 235–236; Bourdieu 1995a, p. 10; Bourdieu 1997a, pp. 88, 96, 150, and 218; Bourdieu 1997b, pp. 60–62; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992f; Bonnewitz 1998, pp. 30–39; Eickelpasch 2002, pp. 56–59; Pels 1995, pp. 91–95; Sintomer 1996, p. 93; Vázquez García 1999, p. 211.

38. Bourdieu characterises this ‘homological competence’ as a ‘social competence’ or ‘social ability’. See, for example, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992e, p. 145.

39. See, for example: Habermas 1987 [1981]–j, pp. 121–123; Habermas 2001 [1984]–g, pp. 150–152.

40. See, for example: Habermas 2004, pp. 875–878 and 886–887; Habermas 2005. It should be noted that, despite the largely theoretical rather than empirical nature of Habermas’s work, there are quite a few empirical studies that draw heavily upon his theory of communicative action. See, for example: Abbas and McLean 2003; Bjola 2005; Deitelhoff and Müller 2005; Edwards 2004; Heng and de Moor 2003; James 2003; Janssen and Kies 2005; Johnston Conover and Searing 2005; Lagendijk 2004; McDonald 2005; Morgan 2002; Niemann 2004; Ulbert and Risse 2005.

41. See, for example: Bourdieu 1977 [1972]; Bourdieu 1977a; Bourdieu 1979a; Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 245–461: ‘Livre 2—Logiques Pratiques’; Bourdieu 1981; Bourdieu 1984a; Bourdieu 1993b; Bourdieu 1996; Bourdieu 1998a; Bourdieu 2005 [2000], esp. pp. 15–192; Bourdieu 2001a; Bourdieu 2004a; Bourdieu and Darbel 1969; Bourdieu and Haacke 1994; Bourdieu and Passeron 1964; Bourdieu and Passeron 1970.

42. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992e, p. 162 (italics removed).

43. For a brief summary of Habermas’s educational background, see, for example: Baert 1998b, p. 134. See also Baert 2005, p. 116.

44. See Hacking 2004, p. 147.

45. As explained above.

46. Habermas 1984 [1976]–a, p. 1 (italics added) (already quoted above).

47. *Ibid.*, p. 2 (italics added) (already quoted above).

48. Bourdieu 1994a, pp. 170–171 (italics added) (my translation).

49. See Habermas 2001 [1984]–a.

50. See Bourdieu 1990 [1980], esp. pp. 25–141.

51. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992d, p. 128 (already quoted above).

52. Bourdieu’s scepticism towards the concept of the lifeworld is expressed in his critique of ethnomethodological, interactionist, and phenomenological approaches to the social. See,

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for example: Bourdieu 1980a, pp. 43–50; Bourdieu 1982f, p. 61; Bourdieu 1992, pp. 225–226; Bourdieu and Eagleton 1992; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992c, p. 113.

In the secondary literature see, for example: Liénard and Servais 2000 [1979], pp. 84–85; Myles 2004; Vandenberghe 1999, pp. 42–44.

53. Translation from German into English: ‘our interpretation of the world’.

54. Translation from German into English: ‘our need for meaning’.

55. Translation from German into English: ‘our normativisation of the world’.

56. Translation from German into English: ‘our need for validity’.



## Chapter 10

### The Foundations of the Social

The attempt to derive the normative foundations of critique from the ontological foundations of the social is based on the assumption that we can only identify solid grounds for social critique by identifying the grounds of the social itself. This assumption can, and needs to, be justified on the basis of three straightforward insights. First, since any form of critique is formulated by a socially situated subject, the most abstract form of critique cannot avoid accepting its *permeation by the social*. To assume that critique needs to be grounded in the social is to recognise that critique is embedded in the social. Second, since any form of social critique is concerned with the constitution of human coexistence, it cannot avoid expressing its *preoccupation with the social*. To assume that critique needs to be grounded in the social is to recognise that critique is concerned with the social. Third, since any form of socially committed critique aims not only at the exploration but also at the emancipation of the human condition, it cannot avoid seeking to articulate a *proposition for the social*. To assume that critique needs to be grounded in the social is to recognise that critique seeks to emancipate the social. In short, we criticise the social because we are part of, concerned with, and challenged by it.

The analysis developed in this study is part of, concerned with, and challenged by the social in that it seeks to identify (1) the ontological foundations of the social, (2) the normative foundations of social critique, and (3) the main features of a comprehensive critical social theory. (1) To identify the ontological foundations of the social means to explore the structural conditions that make social order possible. (2) To identify the normative foundations of social critique means to explore the grounds on which we can justify our agreement or disagreement with the constitution of existing social relations. (3) To identify the main features of a comprehensive critical social theory is to elaborate a systematic theoretical framework that allows us to understand the relationship between the nature of social order and the nature of social critique.

In essence, Habermasian social theory is based on the following three key assumptions:

1. 'communicative action', which is rooted in the lifeworld, can be considered to be the ontological foundation of the social;
2. 'communicative rationality', which is derived from the ordinary subject's communicative competence, can be considered to be the normative foundation of critique; and
3. the dialectical relationship between the lifeworld and the system lies at the heart of a theoretical framework that allows us to locate our communicatively grounded critique *within* the ordinary social.

Bourdieuian social theory, by contrast, is based on the following three key assumptions:

1. 'homological action', which is driven by the interpenetrative relationship between the field and the habitus, can be considered to be the ontological foundation of the social;
2. 'scientific reflexivity', which is derived from the sociologist's objectifying capacity, can be considered to be the normative foundation of critique; and
3. the homological relationship between field and habitus lies at the heart of a theoretical framework that compels us to locate our reflexively grounded critique *outside* the ordinary social.

The foregoing has sought to demonstrate that, although the Habermasian and the Bourdieusian approach provide two very powerful and largely convincing accounts of the social, they also suffer from a number of serious shortcomings. These shortcomings have been elucidated in the fourth and eighth chapter, and selectively elaborated upon in the ninth chapter by comparing and combining the two approaches. Drawing upon some of their complementary insights, the present chapter formulates a tentative outline of an alternative, five-dimensional approach to the social. No attempt shall be made to propose a comprehensive programme for an alternative critical social theory; such an ambitious task is well beyond the scope of this study. Instead, the present chapter only summarises the most important features of a tentative and schematic outline for an alternative approach to the social, which is inspired by Habermasian and Bourdieusian thought, but which at the same time seeks to go beyond these two perspectives.

### ***The Five-Dimensional Approach to the Social***

The five-dimensional approach to the social aims to identify the foundations of human coexistence. Far from constituting a futile exercise in empty speculation, the identification of the ontological foundations of the social is necessary for at least three main reasons. (1) The identification of the foundations of the social allows us to define the *universal* features of human coexistence and thereby overcome the relativism of postmodern thought, for the foundations of human coexistence are the same in any kind of society and can therefore not be reduced to arbitrary, contingent, and group-specific narratives. (2) The identification of the foundations of the social allows us to locate the grounds upon which human coexistence is based in *ordinary* social life and thereby overcome the theoreticism of scholastic thought, for the foundations of human coexistence are situated in the nucleus of society, the lifeworld, and can therefore not be hypostatized into abstract, transcendently removed, and free-floating elements of an intellectual thought experiment. (3) The identification of the foundations of the social allows us to do justice to the *emancipatory* potential inherent in the social and thereby overcome the nihilism of fatalistic thought, for the foundations of human coexistence represent the preconditions for the subject's self-

realisation and can therefore not be ignored, but must be addressed by any social critic who seeks to contribute to the emancipation of the human condition.

In order to identify the structural grounds upon which social order is based, we need to explore the socio-ontological foundations of human existence: 'socio' because they define the ways in which we coexist as *interdependent* entities; 'ontological' because they belong to the very *nature* of human coexistence; and 'foundations' because they constitute the unavoidable *grounds* upon which any form of human coexistence emerges beyond its temporally, spatially, and structurally defined specificity. In short, a socio-ontological foundation describes the unavoidable ground of human coexistence. It may appear relatively uncontroversial to assume that all different forms of human coexistence share at least a few minimal grounds that make social order possible. It is far more controversial, however, to identify these grounds and to specify their overall importance for the constitution of social relations. Hence, before embarking upon the ambitious task of proposing an outline that aims to identify the foundations of the social, it seems reasonable to define more precisely what the constitutive features of a socio-ontological foundation are. Here, the concept of 'socio-ontological foundation' is used to refer to any phenomenon which contains *all* of the following characteristics:

1. A socio-ontological foundation constitutes an *anthropological specificity*. It is derived from human nature and intrinsic only to the human, but not the natural, world.
2. A socio-ontological foundation constitutes an *anthropological invariant*. It is present in any human form of coexistence regardless of its temporal, spatial, and structural specificity.
3. A socio-ontological foundation constitutes an *anthropological ground*. It is not only inherent in, but also fundamental to the human social, that is, it determines the nature of human coexistence in a constitutive, rather than tangential, sense and is anchored in the lifeworld.
4. A socio-ontological foundation constitutes an *anthropological field*. Thus, it manifests itself in the existence of a foundational field. A foundational field represents an ensemble of relationally

structured conditions the existence of which is *necessary* for the emergence of social order. A contingent field, by contrast, represents an ensemble of relationally structured conditions the existence of which is *possible* within the emergence of social order. Hence, what distinguishes foundational fields from contingent fields is their quasi-transcendental status: whereas contingent fields *can* exist in a specific social formation, foundational fields *must* exist in a social formation, allowing for the very possibility of its emergence.

5. A socio-ontological foundation constitutes an *anthropological competence*. It represents not only an integral element of human nature, but also an intuitive capacity that allows us to participate in a foundational field. An anthropological competence manifests itself in a foundational habitus. A foundational habitus represents an ensemble of dispositional structures the existence of which is *necessary* for the emergence of social order. A contingent habitus, by contrast, represents an ensemble of dispositional structures the existence of which is *possible* within the emergence of social order. Thus, what distinguishes a foundational habitus from a contingent habitus is its quasi-transcendental status: whereas a contingent habitus *can* exist in a specific social formation, a foundational habitus *must* exist in a social formation, allowing for the very possibility of its emergence.
6. A socio-ontological foundation constitutes an *anthropological driving force*. It can be regarded as an engine of social evolution that determines the historical development of the human species.
7. A socio-ontological foundation constitutes an *anthropological need*. It is vital to human life: its existence is a precondition for the subject's self-fulfilment, and its repression is a source of the subject's alienation.
8. A socio-ontological foundation constitutes an *anthropological resource*. As a human resource, it is both a motor and a vehicle of social struggle, representing a source of both human harmony and human conflict: its realisation allows for social emancipation, and its colonisation is based on social domination, that is, the struggle over its control is a struggle over human empowerment and dis-empowerment.



9. A socio-ontological foundation constitutes an *anthropological world-relation*. It defines the way we relate to (i) the natural world, (ii) the social world, and (iii) our subjective world.
10. A socio-ontological foundation constitutes an *anthropological telos*. Each socio-ontological foundation possesses a quasi-transcendental teleological orientation which pervades every subject's ordinary engagement with the world.

As stated above, in order for a social phenomenon to qualify as a socio-ontological foundation it must contain *all* of these characteristics. On the basis of this definition, five socio-ontological foundations can be identified. These shall be briefly elucidated in the following section.

## **(I) Labour**

### *1. Labour Constitutes an Anthropological Specificity*

The first specificity that distinguishes us as human beings from other species is the fact that, as working beings, we are at the same time (i) purposive, (ii) cooperative, (iii) creative, and (iv) socio-productive entities. To acknowledge that we live in the world by working upon the world means to recognise that we have created, and continue to create, ourselves by creating our own world. Unlike other entities, we have not simply been thrown into the world, but we throw ourselves back into the world by constantly working upon it.

### *2. Labour Constitutes an Anthropological Invariant*

There is no society that can exist without labour. Whatever the specific mode of production of a particular social formation may be, every society needs to be economically organised in one way or another in order to ensure its material reproduction. Different *Lebensformen* may be characterised by different *Arbeitsformen*, but no human *Lebensform* can do without a specific *Arbeitsform*. As working subjects, we are society-generating subjects.

### *3. Labour Constitutes an Anthropological Ground*

Far from representing a peripheral element of the human social, the constitution of labour is fundamental to the constitution of society.

Labour is the productive foundation of society. It is impossible to understand the structural constitution of society without comprehending its economic organisation. Different forces of production, relations of production, and modes of production describe different forces of existence, relations of existence, and modes of existence. Human existence is grounded upon material production.

*4. Labour Constitutes an Anthropological Field*

The field of economic relations represents a foundational field because no form of society could possibly exist without an economy. Like any other field, the economic field is relationally structured. Yet, as a foundational field, the economic field is not only relationally structured but also possesses the tremendous power to structure all human relations. Contingent fields lack the totalising quality of necessarily permeating all human relations; foundational fields, however, depend on this very quality. All human relations are necessarily, no matter how indirectly, structured by the economic relations in which they are embedded.

*5. Labour Constitutes an Anthropological Competence*

As working entities, we possess a fundamental productive capacity. To be more precise, we have the intuitive capacity to control, cooperate with, and create the world by virtue of our (i) purposive, (ii) cooperative, and (iii) creative potentials, which are realised through labour. Our productive capacity has allowed us to raise ourselves out of nature by creating our own nature. Our capacity to work upon ourselves, upon our own condition, upon our own environment, reflects the distinctively human competence to create humanity through humanity itself: working upon our world, we have learned to work upon our own condition.

*6. Labour Constitutes an Anthropological Driving Force*

Labour is the productive engine of social evolution. It is impossible to understand the historical development of any society without comprehending its economic organisation. This is not to suggest that both the constitution and the evolution of society can be reduced to the nature and development of its economic foundations, but this is to acknowledge that the former cannot be adequately understood without the

latter. Productive forces are historical driving forces. The history of the human species is the history of a productive species: different modes of production have always generated, and will always continue to generate, different societies. Labour is a motor of human history.

*7. Labour Constitutes an Anthropological Need*

We depend on labour. The most advanced, 'postindustrial', or 'post-material' society that we can possibly imagine cannot survive without labour. Our existential dependence upon labour permeates our three worlds. (i) We depend upon labour because we need to control the natural world in order to ensure our survival as a species. Labour is a teleo-productive act. (ii) We depend upon labour because we need to cooperate with our social world in order to coordinate our survival as a species. Labour is a co-productive act. (iii) We depend upon labour because we need to generate our own condition out of our subjective world in order to realise our creative potential as a species. Labour is a self-productive act. In a nutshell, it is because we need the natural, the social, and our subjective world that we need labour.

*8. Labour Constitutes an Anthropological Resource*

The paradox of labour consists in the fact that, on the one hand, it is always presupposed by society ensuring its existence, and that, on the other hand, it is always fought over by society thereby transforming its existence. As a human resource, labour is never fully realised and never fully exploited. There is always a still-to-be to labour: a still-to-be-developed, a still-to-be-improved, a still-to-be-unfolded, a still-to-be-accomplished, in short, a still-to-be-worked-upon. Yet, the way in which we work upon the world—that is, the way in which we organise, coordinate, and distribute labour—is a crucial source of social struggle. A human resource can be exploited both in a humanising and in a dehumanising sense: to exploit labour in a humanising sense means to *cultivate* the purposive, cooperative, and creative potentials inherent in labour; to exploit labour in a dehumanising sense means to *repress* these potentials. The struggle over human resources is always a struggle over the domination and emancipation of human potentials. Class struggle is nothing but the struggle over the control of labour.

9. *Labour Constitutes an Anthropological World-Relation*

Labour is situated in the world and defines how we relate to the world. Our relation to the world is unavoidably permeated by our relation to labour. Any attempt to deny this results in a performative contradiction: the contradiction of pretending to exist divorced from labour whilst depending on it. Human existence is a self-generated form of existence, an *erarbeitete Existenz*. We have generated, and continue to generate, our existence by working (i) upon the world, (ii) with the world, and (iii) from our own world. (i) Working upon the world, we are condemned to shape the world as purposive entities. (ii) Working with the world, we are condemned to share the world as cooperative entities. (iii) Working from our own world, we are condemned to externalise our inner world as creative entities. A working subject necessarily, no matter how implicitly, relates to (i) 'the' world of external nature, (ii) 'our' world of society, and (iii) 'its' world of internal nature, to which it has privileged access. There is no labour without an existential relation to the world.

10. *Labour Constitutes an Anthropological Telos*

Labour can be described as a socio-productive act oriented towards reaching createdness (*Erschaffenheit*). When we work we unavoidably raise four fulfilment claims (*Erfüllungsansprüche*): (i) purposiveness, (ii) cooperativeness, (iii) creativity, and (iv) createdness. In other words, when we work we implicitly demand to (i) have a purpose in the world, (ii) cooperate with the world, (iii) invent the world, and (iv) form the world. The quasi-transcendental telos of labour, expressed in its inherent orientation towards createdness, reflects our distinctively human need to create our own condition: as working entities, we are self-constitutive and self-generative beings.

**(II) Language**

1. *Language Constitutes an Anthropological Specificity*

The second specificity that distinguishes us as human beings from other species is the fact that, as linguistic beings, we are at the same time (i) assertive, (ii) normative, (iii) expressive, and (iv) socio-contemplative entities. What raises us out of nature is our capacity to attribute meaning to the world on the basis of communicatively articulated utterances.

What the world means to us means everything to us. As meaning-producing, meaning-projecting, meaning-perceiving, meaning-interpreting, and meaning-reciprocating entities, it is through language that we have learned how to situate ourselves in the world by signifying it. As a language-based species, we control, comprehend, and critique the world by communicating with one another. The assertive, normative, expressive, and reflexive power inherent in language composes the distinctively human universe of linguistic communication.

*2. Language Constitutes an Anthropological Invariant*

There is no society that could possibly exist without language. The universality of linguistic communication is not contradicted but reaffirmed by the particularity of different languages: different societies may develop different languages characterised by different semantic, grammatical, phonetic, and pragmatic rules; yet, every society must develop a specific language with specific rules in order to regulate social interaction. Different *Sprachformen* reflect different *Lebensformen*, but no human *Lebensform* can do without a human *Sprachform*. As speaking subjects, we are society-generating subjects.

*3. Language Constitutes an Anthropological Ground*

Its foundational force is rooted in its society-generative power: what lies at the heart of any social order is the way in which its subjects communicate with one another. Labour, the productive foundation of society, would be worth nothing without language, the communicative foundation of society: in order to cooperate we need to be able to communicate. Different forces of communication, relations of communication, and modes of communication describe different forces of existence, relations of existence, and modes of existence. Human existence is grounded upon linguistic communication.

*4. Language Constitutes an Anthropological Field*

The linguistic field can be regarded as a foundational field because every society is necessarily structured by language-based communication. Far from representing a peripheral realm of social relationality, the linguistic field derives its omnipresent power from the very condition of society itself: we coexist on condition that we relate to one another commu-

nically. No matter how asymmetrically the linguistic field may be structured, its very existence expresses nothing but human symmetry; our universal condition is to be condemned to communication. Thus, the linguistic field possesses the power to permeate all other—both contingent and foundational—fields: any field would unavoidably collapse without its participants' ability to communicate with one another.

*5. Language Constitutes an Anthropological Competence*

As speaking entities, we possess a fundamental communicative capacity. To be more precise, our communicative competence equips us with (i) the assertive capacity to objectify and control the world, (ii) the normative capacity to evaluate and regulate the world, and (iii) the expressive capacity to reveal and externalise our own world. Our *Weltfähigkeit* depends upon our *Sprachfähigkeit*: our ability to cope with the world is dependent upon our ability to speak (i) about the world, (ii) with the world, and (iii) from our own world. As subjects capable of speech and action, we have gained our relative autonomy from our ability to determine our existential immersion in the world by virtue of our linguistic reflection upon the world.

*6. Language Constitutes an Anthropological Driving Force*

As a speaking species, we have developed ourselves by virtue of language. Language is the communicative engine of social evolution. Unlike other entities, we have made, and continue to make, history through the species-specific—that is, simultaneously assertive, normative, expressive, and reflexive—force of communicative action. The history of the human species is the history of a collective learning process: our capacity to control, comprehend, and critique the world by communicating with one another is the product of the collective effort to shape, understand, and emancipate the world by developing and relying upon the species-coordinative force of language. Language is a motor of human history.

*7. Language Constitutes an Anthropological Need*

We depend on language. Our first sentence expresses unequivocally our need to communicate with one another. Our deep-seated need for linguistic communication undermines any attempt to establish an artificial and equally illusory separation between the individual and society: to

acknowledge that we depend on communication means to recognise that we depend on society. Language enables us to satisfy our need for socialisation. Yet, language does not only allow us to relate to and situate ourselves within the world. In addition, it allows us to contemplate and attach meaning to the world: our need to signify the world reflects our need to make sense of our lives. As contemplative beings, we have converted our capacity to interpret the world (*Bedeutungsfähigkeit*) into the need to interpret the world (*Bedeutungsbedürfnis*): a senseless life seems worthless to us. We are immersed in meaning even if we aim at meaninglessness because the very aim of seeking-to-be is permeated by meaning. Our hermeneutic passion to signify the world (*Bedeutungsdrang*) is not an academic thought experiment, but an ordinary reality: we need language not only to coordinate and relate to, but also to make sense of reality.

#### *8. Language Constitutes an Anthropological Resource*

Since language is a human resource, its constitution cannot be dissociated from the constitution of power. (a) Language is a *source* of power. As such, it is both a discursive and a social source of power. As a *discursive source* of power, it has the power to guide our actions by virtue of the forceless force of the most convincing validity claim. As a *social source* of power, it has the power to determine our actions by virtue of the forceful force of the most forceful legitimacy claim. (b) Language is a *vehicle* of power. As such, it is both a discursive and a social vehicle of power. As a *discursive vehicle* of power, it can be used to activate the emancipatory potential inherent in our species-unifying and understanding-oriented communicative competence. As a *social vehicle* of power, it can be used to reinforce the repressive potential inherent in our species-dividing and legitimacy-based linguistic capital. Distorted communication occurs whenever the power of social legitimacy prevails over the power of argumentative validity and the power of linguistic capital over the power of communicative competence. Emancipated communication, on the other hand, occurs whenever the legitimacy of validity triumphs over the validity of legitimacy and the power of communicative competence over the power of linguistic capital. Either way, language will always remain a resource of both domination and emancipation.

9. *Language Constitutes an Anthropological World-Relation*

Our relation to the world is linguistically mediated. Hence, (i) the natural world, (ii) the social world, and (iii) our subjective world represent meaningful worlds to us because of our linguistic capacity to attach meaning to their existence. (i) Speaking about the world, we are condemned to describe the world as assertive entities. (ii) Speaking with the world, we are condemned to regulate the world as normative entities. (iii) Speaking from our own world, we are condemned to disclose our inner world as expressive entities. In other words, the human world is a linguistified world. To the extent that our world-comprehension (*Weltverarbeitung*) is achieved through linguistic comprehension (*Sprachverarbeitung*), our relation to the world (*Weltbezug*) is always also a relation to language (*Sprachbezug*); and to the extent that language is inherently reflexive, our relation to the world is permeated by the intersubjectively developed potential of linguistic reflexivity. Put another way, a world-relation that is linguistically mediated is a world-relation that is inherently reflexive: as linguistic beings, we relate to the world through the power of reflexive speech.

10. *Language Constitutes an Anthropological Telos*

Language can be described as a socio-contemplative act oriented towards reaching reflexivity (*Nachdenklichkeit*). When we speak we unavoidably raise four validity claims (*Geltungsansprüche*): (i) truth, (ii) correctness, (iii) sincerity, and (iv) reflexivity. In other words, when we speak we implicitly presuppose that our utterances are (i) true, (ii) appropriate, (iii) truthful, and (iv) thoughtful. The quasi-transcendental telos of language, expressed in its inherent orientation towards reflexivity, reflects our distinctively human need to attach meaning to our own condition: as speaking entities, we are self-interpretive and self-reflexive beings.

**(III) Culture**

1. *Culture Constitutes an Anthropological Specificity*

The third specificity that distinguishes us as human beings from other species is the fact that, as cultural beings, we are at the same time (i) connective, (ii) collective, (iii) individuating, and (iv) socio-constructive entities. What makes us not only generate, but also depend upon our own



condition is our intersubjectively constructed place in the world: culture. Culture represents the human locus of existence, the place in which we need to be immersed in order to be immersed in the world. In essence, culture is an intersubjectively constructed realm of human encounter. We do not only belong to the world and we do not only belong to our species, but we also belong to different—temporally and spatially contingent—groups of people that *mediate* our relation to the world and to ourselves as a species. Intersubjective mediation is culture. As soon as two subjects capable of cooperation and communication interact with one another they unavoidably generate culture: successful interaction requires competent interactors; we can only acquire the ability to interact by generating culture, that is, a largely implicitly negotiated realm of customs, codes, and traditions that equip us with sufficient ontological security to encounter the world by encountering one another.

### *2. Culture Constitutes an Anthropological Invariant*

There is no society that could possibly exist without culture. *What* kind of culture a specific social formation generates in a particular geographic and historical context is anthropologically variable; *that* every social formation generates culture in any geographic and historical context is anthropologically invariable. To locate human existence in culture means to locate humanity in intersubjectivity. All societies generate a series of costumes, codes, and traditions which allow for a minimum of intersubjectively regulated ontological security. Different human *Lebensformen* may have generated different *Kulturformen*, but the construction of any human *Lebensform* is inconceivable without the construction of a specific *Kulturform*. As cultural subjects, we are society-generating subjects.

### *3. Culture Constitutes an Anthropological Ground*

Culture lies at the heart of the constitution of any social order. To recognise that culture is fundamental to human life means to acknowledge that society is fundamental to human life. Our culturally developed sense of belonging determines how we relate to the world by relating to our human fellows. If labour forms the basis of human cooperation and if language represents the basis of human communication, then culture constitutes the basis of human correlation. How we relate to the world

depends on how we correlate, that is, how we relate to one another. We are not only cooperative and communicative, but also correlative—that is, culturally contingent—beings. In order to cooperate and communicate we need to be able to correlate: as societal beings, we coexist by working with, speaking with, and relating to one another. Different forces of correlation, relations of correlation, and modes of correlation describe different forces of existence, relations of existence, and modes of existence. Human existence is grounded upon cultural belonging.

*4. Culture Constitutes an Anthropological Field*

The cultural field represents a foundational field because society is only conceivable as a culturally mediated form of coexistence. To relate to one another means to cultivate one another. The cultural field can be regarded as the epitome of human inbetweenness: human inbetweenness is never simply there but always involves the challenge of being constructed. A social construction is nothing but the—direct or indirect—product of the encounter between at least two subjects. The power of the cultural field is rooted in its existential centrality: a field is the ensemble of structurally interrelated subjects, and culture makes this interrelationality possible in the first place. As a foundational field, culture pervades all other fields, for only insofar as subjects are able to relate to one another are they able to constitute a field.

*5. Culture Constitutes an Anthropological Competence*

As belonging entities, we possess a fundamental cultural capacity. Our cultural capacity equips us with (i) the connective capacity to be attached to the world, (ii) the collective capacity to be integrated in the world, and (iii) the individuating capacity to personalise the world; that is, our cultural capacity equips us with a sense of belonging to (i) the objective, (ii) the normative, and (iii) our subjective world. A subject capable of work and speech is nothing without a sense of belonging. The ontological locality of culture grants us the privilege of belonging to the world by belonging to society. Being *gesellschaftsfähig* presupposes being *kulturfähig*: our ability to be immersed in society depends on our ability to be immersed in culture. Our productive capacity to shape the world and our linguistic capacity to reflect upon the world are not enough to give meaning to our lives; our search for existential meaningfulness is

also dependent on our cultural capacity to develop a sense of belonging to the world. Only if we are able to feel at home in the house of being are we able to inhabit and rebuild the house of being; there is no creative or reflective transcendence of the world without an immanent attachment to the world; there is no longing for the world without an intersubjectively created sense of belonging to the world. A culturally competent subject is a subject that is able to belong to the world.

*6. Culture Constitutes an Anthropological Driving Force*

Culture is the regulative engine of social evolution. No socio-historical development can take place without culturally situated subjects. Culture is the locus of our historical situatedness in the world. The degree of development of any social formation is always also the degree of the development of its culture. As cultural beings, we always stand in the tradition of the hitherto-been, but we also look at the horizon of the still-to-come: culture is never for ever. As a historical driving force of the human species, culture is in a constant mode of flux and thereby reaffirms the very contingency of society. The omnipresence of culture reaffirms its power to structure our actions; the omnipresence of our actions reaffirms our power to structure culture. The history of the human species is the history of a cultural species: our capacities to form the world cooperatively and to reflect upon the world communicatively have allowed, and continue to allow, us to cultivate the world collectively. The developmental force of culture is always already present in every social background: every *Kulturform* pre-structures the ways in which we work upon, reflect upon, and relate to the world. Whether we live in a primitive or complex, tight or loose, horizontally structured or vertically structured, control-based or freedom-based, collectivist or individualist, relatively homogeneous or relatively heterogeneous culture—the culturally structured realm of belonging defines the historical arena of the *espace des possibles* in which societal development can take place. Culture is a socio-constructive force of development. As such, it is a motor of human history.

*7. Culture Constitutes an Anthropological Need*

We depend on culture. All human beings have a deep-seated need to develop a sense of belonging to the world. Culture enables us to translate

*Weltvorgefundenheit* (world-prefoundness) into our *Weltzugehörigkeit* (world-belonging), through which we assume our *Welteingebundenheit* (world-involvement). Culture reaffirms the preponderance of the social because it is born of an intersubjectively generated world. Yet, culture is not limited to the social world. On the contrary, it transcends the boundaries of the social world because it endows us with a sense of belonging to all three worlds: culture simultaneously regulates how we relate to (i) the natural, (ii) the social, and (iii) our subjective world. Our relation to nature and our relation to ourselves are just as permeated by culture as our relation to society. Human needs are never only naturally but always also culturally determined: what we want from our natural, social, and subjective world depends largely on what our culture makes us want. Our need-based nature converts culture into an ambivalent affair. On the one hand, culture allows us to realise our capacity to belong to the world (*Kulturfähigkeit*) by satisfying our need to belong to the world (*Kulturbedürfnis*). On the other hand, culture compels us to exploit our capacity to belong to the world (*Kulturfähigkeit*) by regulating how we belong to the world (*Kulturherrschaft*). Either way, culture reflects our social interdependence as a species: we need culture in order to relate and belong to the world.

#### 8. Culture Constitutes an Anthropological Resource

Like any other human resource, culture is always a potential source of social conflict. In essence, cultural conflicts are conflicts between different *Lebensformen*: different communities and different societies promote different conceptions of what an appropriate way of life may be. Human coexistence is never simply made of facticity; it is always also made of validity. Culture embodies the ambivalent character of the human world: our simultaneous immersion in facticity and validity. The facticity of a given *Lebensform* implies its validity only for a specific *Lebensgemeinschaft* or, at most, for a specific *Lebensgesellschaft*. The validity of a given *Lebensform*, however, always potentially clashes with the facticity of another *Lebensgemeinschaft* or *Lebensgesellschaft*. Culture is an anthropological resource which we can, and need to, fall back upon in order to construct our identities. Identity struggles between persons are always also identity struggles between cultures because it is through culture that we acquire different—coexisting and often contradictory—

identities in the first place. Whether our identity is primarily based on class, ethnicity, gender, age, or ability, it is through the culturally mediated recognition or misrecognition of our identities by other subjects that we develop a culturally situated sense of belonging. The struggle over our identities is always a struggle over our culturally articulated belonging to the world: the ambivalent authority of culture consists in its power to tolerate or deprecate, promote or repress, include or exclude our identities. Therefore, culture will always represent an anthropological resource of both empowerment and disempowerment.

*9. Culture Constitutes an Anthropological World-Relation*

As culturally situated beings, we relate to the world by seeking to belong to it. Even when we aim to distance ourselves from a specific element or sphere of reality, our self-distanciation from the world only reaffirms our inescapable relation to the world. A worldless life would be a worthless life: life seems worth living because the world seems worth relating to. Culture enables us to invent our relation to the world by relating to one another: human existence is a self-cultivated form of existence, a *kultivierte Existenz*. We cultivate our existence by cultivating our relation to (i) the natural world, (ii) the social world, and (iii) our subjective world. Belonging to a specific culture means relating to the world through the eyes of a specific culture. In other words, our *Weltbezug* (world-relation) is only thinkable in terms of a *Kulturbezug* (cultural relation).

*10. Culture Constitutes an Anthropological Telos*

Culture can be described as a socio-constructive act oriented towards reaching situatedness (*Situiertheit*). When we belong we unavoidably raise four identity claims (*Identitätsansprüche*): (i) connectivity, (ii) community, (iii) individuality, and (iv) situatedness. In other words, when we belong we implicitly demand to be (i) connected to the world, (ii) integrated in the world, (iii) distinguished by the world, and (iv) situated in the world. The quasi-transcendental telos of culture, expressed in its inherent orientation towards situatedness, reflects our distinctively human need to place ourselves within our own condition: as belonging entities, we are self-identitarian and self-cultivative beings.

#### **(IV) Desire**

##### *1. Desire Constitutes an Anthropological Specificity*

The fourth specificity that distinguishes us as human beings from other species is the fact that, as longing beings, we are at the same time (i) intentional, (ii) coprojective, (iii) imaginative, and (iv) socio-utopian entities. In other words, what gives human existence a distinctive character is the fact that we are desiring beings. We live in the world by desiring the world. The specificity of our place in the world is not only due to our productive, linguistic, and cultural capacities, but also due to our desiderative capacity. Our abilities to work, speak, and belong would be worth nothing without our ability to long. Human hereeness is always already inhabited by human beyondness: we have a desire to envisage the world, to imagine it, to long for it, to look forward to it; in short, we have a desire to desire the world.

##### *2. Desire Constitutes an Anthropological Invariant*

There is no society that can exist without desire. A subject incapable of desiring the world is a subject incapable of desiring life. To be sure, inasmuch as we can be robbed of our formative, reflexive, and cultivative capacities, we can be deprived of our desiderative capacity. Alienated creativity, distorted reflexivity, and unrecognised identity are just as common as deprived fantasy. Yet, even the alienation, distortion, non-recognition, or deprivation of a socio-ontological capacity reaffirms its existence: only what is part of us can be repressed in us. Whether repressed or promoted, any social formation is dependent on its subjects' capacity to project themselves upon the world. Different *Lebensformen* may have developed different *Projektionsformen*, but no human *Lebensform* can prescind from human *Projektionsformen*. As longing subjects, we are society-generating subjects.

##### *3. Desire Constitutes an Anthropological Ground*

As such, it does not stand for an ephemeral sub-element of the human social, but it embodies a motivational cornerstone of human coexistence. Anything that lies at the basis of the social determines its constitution. The constitution of human society is permeated by the projective force of its desiring subjects. Different forces of projection, relations of

projection, and modes of projection describe different forces of existence, relations of existence, and modes of existence. Labour, language, and culture represent different forces, relations, and modes of projection; they reflect our species-constitutive desire to create, contemplate, and cultivate the world through the existential effort of projecting ourselves upon the world. Human existence is grounded upon desire.

*4. Desire Constitutes an Anthropological Field*

The desiderative field may be regarded as the most peculiar field of all foundational fields because it escapes the canon of classical sociological terminology. Yet, the desiderative field is just as foundational and omnipresent as the economic, linguistic, and cultural fields. The field of working subjects is a field of cooperating subjects; the field of speaking subjects is a field of communicating subjects; the field of belonging subjects is a field of correlating subjects; and the field of longing subjects is a field of coprojecting subjects. The foundational nature of the desiderative field is due to its power to permeate all other fields: we relate to reality by projecting ourselves upon reality. The *espace des possibles* of every field is an *espace des projets*.

*5. Desire Constitutes an Anthropological Competence*

As longing entities, we possess a fundamental desiderative capacity. To be more precise, in our everyday lives we are driven by our ability to convert the objective, the normative, and our subjective world into existential universes that are permeated by the human desire to project ourselves upon the world. Hence, our desiderative capacity equips us with (i) the intentional capacity to project ourselves upon the natural world, (ii) the coprojective capacity to project ourselves upon and with the social world, and (iii) the imaginative capacity to project ourselves upon and from our subjective world. Our formative, reflexive, and cultivative capacities are all nourished by our projective competence: a subject capable of creation, reflection, and cultivation is always already capable of projection as well. Our capacities to create, reflect upon, and cultivate the world are impregnated with our capacity to project ourselves upon the world. As desiring beings, we are able to suffuse the world with our desire to be challenged by the world.

6. *Desire Constitutes an Anthropological Driving Force*

Desire is the motivational engine of social evolution. The interpenetrating forces of productive, communicative, and cultivative action would lack their *raison d'être* without the motivational force of desiderative action. As envisaging entities, we have managed to confiscate our existential immanence by virtue of our projective transcendence: we live the here and the today by projecting a there and a tomorrow. Human history is the history of the human towards: we work towards something by virtue of labour (*auf etwas hinarbeiten*), we think towards something by virtue of language (*auf etwas hindenken*), we relate towards something by virtue of culture (*hinzugehören*), and we project ourselves towards something by virtue of our desire (*sich zu etwas hinsehnen*). Human history is driven by the human yearning for a towards. Our towards makes history an inevitable process; history is unavoidably desired by a desiring species. Desire is a motor of human history.

7. *Desire Constitutes an Anthropological Need*

We depend on desire. Desire is a double-edged sword: it makes us both tremendously powerful and tremendously vulnerable. Whereas the presence of desire is the source of our existential strength, its absence is the source of our existential fragility. In essence, the ambivalence of our dependence on desire is due to our deep-seated need to desire and to be desired at the same time. Our *need to desire* manifests itself in our desire to project ourselves upon the world: the human world is a world nourished by intentions, projects, and fantasy. Our *need to be desired* manifests itself in our desire to be desired by the world: the human subject is a subject nourished by being part of other subjects' intentions, projects, and fantasy. Inasmuch as we need others, we need to be needed by others. Inasmuch as we desire the world, we desire to be desired by the world.

8. *Desire Constitutes an Anthropological Resource*

As a fundamental human resource, our desiderative capacity converts us into both subjects and objects of struggle. As subjects of struggle, we seek to mobilise our projective potential in order to situate ourselves in the world according to our desires. As objects of struggle, our projective potential can be instrumentalised by others in order to situate us in



the world according to their desires. The stability of any social system depends on its capacity to regulate our desires in such a way that the latter reinforce the legitimacy of the former. What is justified is theoretically legitimate; what is desired is practically legitimate. The corporeal nature of our habitus compels us to perceive, appreciate, and act upon the world in accordance with the desires that are desirable in terms of our field-specific attachment to the world. The reproductive power of any social system depends on its power to colonise our desires in terms of the systemically desirable. As objects of desire, we can accept to tame our projective potential within the framework of the given; as subjects of desire, we can seek to develop our projective potential beyond the framework of the given.

*9. Desire Constitutes an Anthropological World-Relation*

We desire to relate to the world because we depend on it. As desiderative beings, we possess the distinctive capacity to relate to the world by placing ourselves at the same time beyond the world. Thus, we do not only relate to, but we also project ourselves upon the world. Be it through the projective power of creative productivity, linguistic reflexivity, or social constructability, we relate to the world both as a world that is what it is and as a world that could be what it is not. The transcendent power of desire converts (i) the natural world, (ii) the social world, and (iii) our subjective world into worlds which do not only compose a reality for us but which also pose a challenge to us. There is always a beyond to the here of the human within.

*10. Desire Constitutes an Anthropological Telos*

Desire can be described as a socio-utopian act oriented towards reaching beyondness (*Jenseitigkeit*). When we desire we unavoidably raise four realisability claims (*Verwirklichungsansprüche*): (i) intentionality, (ii) coprojectiveness, (iii) fantasy, and (iv) beyondness. In other words, when we desire we implicitly demand to (i) intentionalise the world, (ii) project ourselves upon and with the world, (iii) fantasise about the world, and (iv) transcend the world. The quasi-transcendental telos of desire, expressed in its inherent orientation towards beyondness, reflects our distinctively human need to transcend our own condition: as longing entities, we are self-projective and self-transcendent beings.

## **(V) Experience**

### *1. Experience Constitutes an Anthropological Specificity*

The fifth specificity that distinguishes us as human beings from other species is the fact that, as experiential beings, we are at the same time (i) objective, (ii) intersubjective, (iii) subjective, and (iv) immersive entities. Thus, what gives human life an idiosyncratic character is that we are experience-gathering beings (*erfahrungssammelnde Wesen*). Of course, animals are also immersed in horizons of experience and develop their instinctual capacities in relation to an environment, the experience of which allows them to situate themselves in the world. What their experiential horizon lacks, however, is what lies at the heart of the distinctively human form of experiencing life: our experiential immersedness in the foundations of the social. Our immersion in social reality induces us to develop our formative, reflexive, cultivative, and projective potentials. Only by experiencing reality intersubjectively in our lifeworlds are we able to absorb the horizons of labour, language, culture, and desire as horizons that describe the existential specificity of humanity. The existential force of experience allows us to immerse ourselves in the horizon of human life.

### *2. Experience Constitutes an Anthropological Invariant*

There is no society that could exist without the experiential horizon of its subjects. The quotidian reality of subjects' experiences is infinitely diverse; yet, the existential centrality of their experiences is inescapably universal. Different *Lebensformen* develop different *Erlebnisformen*: they may diverge insofar as they may privilege either collective or individual, immediate or mediated, standardised or improvised forms of experience; they all converge, however, in having to rely upon the existential force of human experience in order to allow for the possibility of social order. An existent society is an experienced society. As experiencing subjects, we are society-generating subjects.

### *3. Experience Constitutes an Anthropological Ground*

Everybody's life-horizon consists of an accumulation of different experiences. The ever-growing totality of these experiences forms the basis of who we are because what we are is what we have become through our

immersion in life. There is no worldly life without world-involvement. The foundational force of experience is the ground upon which the foundational forces of labour, language, culture, and desire can develop in the first place. Different forces of experience, relations of experience, and modes of experience describe different forces of existence, relations of existence, and modes of existence. As an existential force, experience enables us to absorb the world; as an existential relation, experience allows us to refer to the world; and as an existential mode, experience permits us to be involved in the world. Human existence is grounded upon worldly experience.

*4. Experience Constitutes an Anthropological Field*

The experiential field is the field of experiencing subjects. As such, it is omnipresent in the social world and pervades all other fields, for a field-immersed actor needs to experience the world in order to be able to participate in it. We coexist on condition that we are able to experience one another. Whenever we relate to one another as cooperative, communicative, correlative, or coprojective entities, we relate to one another as co-experiential entities: all efforts to form, comprehend, inhabit, and invent the world collectively would be in vain without our existential effort to experience the world collectively. The more individualised, mediated, and systemised our efforts to experience the world become, the further we distance ourselves from the cradle of human coexistential experience: lifeworldly intersubjectivity. The lifeworld constitutes the foundational realm of human experience par excellence, for we owe our capacity of developing our socio-ontological competences to the possibility of experiencing face-to-face relations. As the French translation suggests, the lifeworld is literally to be understood as a lived world, a *monde vécu*; that is, the lifeworld is an experienced world because there is no human life without human experience.

*5. Experience Constitutes an Anthropological Competence*

As living entities, we possess a fundamental experiential capacity. To be more precise, our capacity to experience the world allows us to absorb the objective, the intersubjective, and our subjective world as the existential horizons in which our immersion in the world takes place. Our

experiential capacity embodies (i) our objective capacity to experience the physical world, (ii) our intersubjective capacity to experience the social world, and (iii) our subjective capacity to experience our own personal world, to which we have privileged access. Our habitus constitutes our experiential house of being: it enables us to perceive, appreciate, and act upon the world in accordance with a subjectively internalised horizon of experience. Our schemes of perception, appreciation, and action are products of our experiential encounter with the world: *what* we experience will determine *how* we will continue to experience the world. No socio-ontological habitus can possibly develop without the experience of the world; and no field-specific habitus can possibly develop without the experience of a specific field. Through the socio-ontological experiences of cooperation, communication, correlation, and coprojection we have become subjects capable of human life, for only through the collective experiences of cooperating, communicating, correlating, and coprojecting have we been able to construct a social world beyond the natural world. The existence of the social depends on its experience by socio-ontologically competent actors.

*6. Experience Constitutes an Anthropological Driving Force*

Experience is the existential engine of social evolution. Human action does not occur out of the blue, but out of experience, no matter how unrelated or irrelevant previous experiences may appear to a specific human action. Depending on how we have experienced the world, we will shape, contemplate, inhabit, and reinvent the world one way or another. The history of the human species is the history of a collective experience: our inescapable immersedness in the hitherto-been constitutes a horizon of experience in which the world presents itself to us as a still-to-become. Our internalised stock of experiences is nothing but a stock of history: the projective nature of the human towards is derived from the experiential nature of the human behind. Our behind allows us to invent the towards. Experience is a motor of human history.

*7. Experience Constitutes an Anthropological Need*

We depend on experience. We need to experience the world in order to situate ourselves in the world. Experience is the developmental driv-

ing force of every individual. An individual becomes an individual through individual experiences: even collective experiences are experienced from the unique perspective of every subject with a unique place in the world and a unique life-story. Yet, the particularity of our experiences is embedded in the universality of our need for experiences: our socio-ontological competences, which allow us to accept our privileged membership in the social world, are worth nothing without a context of experience in which they can develop in the first place. In fact, our coexistential competences develop out of coexistential conditions. In essence, our experience of the world (*Welterlebnis*) allows us to satisfy our need for the world (*Weltbedürfnis*); our experience of nature (*Naturerlebnis*) allows us to satisfy our need for nature (*Naturbedürfnis*); our experience of society (*Gesellschaftserlebnis*) allows us to satisfy our need for society (*Gesellschaftsbedürfnis*); and our experience of ourselves (*Selbsterlebnis*) allows us to satisfy our need for ourselves (*Selbstbedürfnis*). To be part of the human universe means to be dependent upon the experience of objectivity, intersubjectivity, and subjectivity.

#### *8. Experience Constitutes an Anthropological Resource*

Experience is the most precious resource of human life because the latter would vanish in a realm of nothingness without the former. Experience is such a fundamental human resource because access to experience is access to development: only insofar as we are able to experience one another in the lifeworld are we able to develop the empowering potentials inherent in labour, language, culture, and desire. In order to become human, we need to experience the human world. The lifeworld is the existential realm in which we are exposed to the experience of humanity. It decides who and what we are and, more importantly, who and what we become through the intersubjectively constituted experience of the world. Inasmuch as collective forms of experience cannot substitute for the uniqueness of individual experiences by whose interconnectedness they are composed, individual forms of experience cannot substitute for the universality of collective experiences by whose omnipresence they are permeated. The very possibility of the human being-in-the-world depends on the necessity of being-with-one-another: we enter the realm of being through somebody else's being; from the very beginning, we

are immersed in human interdependence. Both the empowerment and the disempowerment of our socio-ontological potentials depend on the control over our experiential horizons. The more we are forced to accept the givenness (*Gegebenheit*) of our experiential horizons, the more we are dominated by them; the more we are allowed to contribute to the madeness (*Gemachtheit*) of our experiential horizons, the more we are emancipated by them. The struggle over our experiences is a struggle over our lives.

*9. Experience Constitutes an Anthropological World-Relation*

Experience determines our relation to the world. Experience enables us to develop an objective, intersubjective, and subjective relation to the world. To recognise that, as human beings, our lives are caught up in objectivity, intersubjectivity, and subjectivity is to acknowledge the complexity of our experiential relation to the world. We are never simply there, but we are always already through others and through ourselves. Human existence is an experienced existence, an *erlebtes Leben*. Our experience of life is an experience of (i) nature, (ii) society, and (iii) individuality; in short, our experience of life is a human world experience. We relate to the world by experiencing the natural world, the social world, and our subjective world as the spheres in which our lives are unavoidably immersed.

*10. Experience Constitutes an Anthropological Telos*

Experience can be described as a socio-existential act oriented towards reaching immersedness (*Eingetauchtheit*). When we experience we unavoidably raise four involvement claims (*Eingebundenheitsansprüche*): (i) objectivity, (ii) intersubjectivity, (iii) subjectivity, and (iv) immersedness. In other words, when we experience we implicitly presuppose that our life is (i) objective, (ii) intersubjective, (iii) subjective, and (iv) immersive. The quasi-transcendental telos of experience, expressed in its inherent orientation towards immersedness, reflects our distinctively human need to gather experiences about our own condition: as experience-collecting entities, we are self-becoming and self-outgrowing beings.

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In summary, the human species is a formative, reflexive, cultivative, desiderative, and experiential species. Labour allows us to realise ourselves as purposive, cooperative, creative, and socio-productive entities. Language allows us to realise ourselves as assertive, normative, expressive, and socio-contemplative entities. Culture allows us to realise ourselves as connective, collective, individuating, and socio-constructive entities. Desire allows us to realise ourselves as intentional, coprojective, imaginative, and socio-utopian entities. And experience allows us to realise ourselves as objective, intersubjective, subjective, and immersive entities. An emancipatory social theory is a theory that recognises, rather than ignores, the empowering potentials inherent in labour, language, culture, desire, and experience. An emancipatory society is a society that promotes, rather than represses, these potentials. To claim fulfilment through labour, validity through language, identity through culture, realisability through desire, and involvement through experience means to claim integrity through humanity. The most repressive society cannot destroy the potential of this integrity, and the most emancipatory society can never fully realise it, for both the negation and the affirmation of humanity can only continue to challenge our distinctive potentiality.

## Conclusion

The attempt to identify the normative foundations of critical theory by exploring the ontological foundations of the social constitutes an ambitious endeavour. Considering the complexity of the nature of the social, the difficulties inherent in any comprehensive theoretical project that seeks to uncover the ontological foundations of the social can hardly be exaggerated. The question of how critical theory can justify itself by grounding its own normative standpoint does not lead to a straightforward, unambiguous answer. On the contrary, the very nature of critical thought seeks to accept the controversial character of any systematic effort to grasp the complexity of the social in terms of a comprehensive social theory. Hence, the attempt to ground critical theory in a universal account of the foundations of the social is, by definition, a controversial project. This study has confronted the complexity of this project by examining the Habermasian project of critical theory, the Bourdieusian project of reflexive sociology, and areas of convergence and divergence between the two approaches, making a case both for their cross-fertilisation and for a tentative outline of an alternative, five-dimensional approach to the social. The main conclusions to be drawn from the analysis developed in the preceding ten chapters can be summarised as follows.



Part I has provided a systematic analysis of Habermasian critical theory. The first chapter has given a detailed account of the epistemological underpinnings of the concept of critical theory. (i) The analysis of the relationship between knowledge and critique is concerned with the centrality of critical capacity for the project of critical theory. Critique enables subjects to distance themselves reflectively from their inevitable immersion in the social. Since, according to Habermas, our critical capacity is embedded in our communicative capacity, the normative foundations of critique are to be located in the rational foundations of ordinary language. (ii) The analysis of the relationship between knowledge and interest is concerned with the ineluctable link between human cognition and human action. Following the early Habermas, our transcendental *Erkenntnisinteressen* are embedded in our anthropological *Lebensinteressen*: the knowledge-constitutive interests of communicative actors reflect the life-constitutive interests of a communicative species. (iii) The analysis of the relationship between knowledge and language is concerned with the linguistically mediated normativity of human existence. Since linguistic horizons are intersubjectively created, the centrality of language reveals the centrality of the social. The simultaneously immanent and transcendent situatedness of human beings in the world manifests itself in the power of language: language enables us to move both within and beyond the givenness of reality.

The second chapter has sought to clarify the debate over the philosophical cornerstones of critical theory. (i) According to Habermas, the aporias of historical materialism are rooted in its one-sided prioritisation of labour, leading to three forms of reductionism. A productivist view tends to reduce all symbolic dimensions to the material dimensions of social life. An instrumentalist view tends to reduce the social to a structural totality that is primarily driven by instrumental, rather than communicative, rationality. A positivist view tends to equate the horizon of the social world with the horizon of the natural world. (ii) Habermas contends that the aporias of early critical theory stem from its fatalistic preoccupation with instrumental reason.

## Conclusion

The Habermasian reformulation of critical theory is motivated by the ambitious attempt to obtain a 'passport for critique' by uncovering the emancipatory potential inherent in the communicative foundations of society. Communicative rationality forms the basis of social critique: it is the epitome of the social 'for-itself'. Action rationality reveals the immediacy of human existence: it is the epitome of the social 'in-itself'. Communicative action describes the universal condition of human intersubjectivity: it is the epitome of the social 'for-and-in-itself'. (iii) Following Habermas's critique of linguistic idealism, the aporias of philosophical hermeneutics are rooted in its short-sighted interpretivist conception of language. By contrast, critical hermeneutics puts forward a socio-holistic conception of language, recognising that language is a constitutive component of social reality, social practices, social change, social criticism, and social power.

The third chapter has elucidated the main features of the Habermasian paradigm shift in critical theory.

(i) In order to understand the Habermasian reconstruction of historical materialism one needs to examine the Habermasian architecture of the social. According to this architecture, the lifeworld constitutes the ontological base of society. The complementarity of the lifeworld and communicative action is rooted in their mutual dependence: the coexistential force of the lifeworld depends on the coordinative force of communicative action just as much as the coordinative force of communicative action depends on the coexistential force of the lifeworld. The system, on the other hand, epitomises every society's need for at least a minimum of functionally regulated structural differentiation. It differs most fundamentally from the lifeworld in terms of its predominant type of rationality: whereas the lifeworld is based on communicative rationality, the system is driven by functionalist rationality. The problematic relationship between the system and the lifeworld leads to one of the most fundamental tensions in the modern world: the structural discrepancy between communicative and functionalist rationality. The more autonomy is gained by the system, the more heteronomy is ascribed to the lifeworld. The systemic colonisation of the lifeworld causes the pathological deformation of the communicative infrastructure of the social.

(ii) The Habermasian reconstruction of critical theory seeks to locate the normative foundations of critique in the communicative foundations of society. The notion of universal pragmatics is based on the assumption that communication is only possible as the combination of language-based speech and speech-based language. The existential power of communication is reflected in the transcendental power of validity claims: to regard the fourth validity claim, comprehensibility, as the most fundamental validity claim means to acknowledge the preponderance of the social. The link between validity claims and our world-immersion reveals that the four main types of human action correspond to the four main dimensions of ordinary speech. Thus, teleological, normatively guided, dramaturgical, and communicative action cannot be separated from the constative, normative, expressive, and intelligible dimensions of ordinary speech. The 'communicative argument', which seeks to ground human action and ordinary speech in our need for mutual understanding, is based on three presuppositions: communicative foundationalism, communicative holism, and communicative criticism. Hence, communicative action constitutes the ontological foundation of a coordinatively consolidated whole that can be discursively reflected upon. The ideal speech situation epitomises the *Gesellschaftlichkeit* inherent in *Sprachlichkeit*. Our orientation towards reaching understanding is an orientation towards realising coexistence. The utopian potential of speech reflects the utopian potential of the ordinary social.

(iii) The Habermasian reconstruction of hermeneutics aims at the theoretical reconsolidation of what is practically always already consolidated: intersubjectivity. An intersubjectivist understanding of the social transforms philosophical hermeneutics into socio-critical hermeneutics. The latter, as argued above, recognises that social selves are only conceivable as contingent, fluid, multiple, contradictory, and knowledgeable selves.

The fourth chapter has tackled some of the main shortcomings inherent in Habermas's communication-theoretic reconceptualisation of the social.

(i) The Habermasian reconstruction of historical materialism is based on a highly questionable interpretation of Marxian thought,

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underestimating the similarities, rather than the differences, between Habermas's communication-theoretic and Marx's materialist approach to the social. First, Habermas and Marx converge in that both insist upon the essentially practical nature of knowledge, thereby opposing the positivist programme of a value-free science. Second, Habermas and Marx converge in that both assume that humans need language because they depend on symbolically mediated interaction. Third, Habermas and Marx converge in that both the Habermasian paradigm of communication and the Marxian paradigm of production are embedded in a Kantian tripartite conception of human existence; that is, the constative, normative, and expressive power inherent in language goes hand in hand with the purposive, cooperative, and creative power inherent in labour. As socio-contemplative entities, we are oriented towards reaching *Verständlichkeit*; as socio-productive entities, we are oriented towards reaching *Erschaffenheit*.

(ii) The Habermasian reformulation of critical theory seeks to overcome the epistemological vacuum of early critical theory by grounding the power of critique in the power of communicative rationality. Yet, as argued above, this endeavour is far from uncontroversial. First, by locating the emancipatory potential of the social exclusively in the communicative rationality of ordinary language, Habermas underestimates our non-linguistic, yet equally species-specific and species-enriching, capacities to raise ourselves out of nature. The emancipatory transcendence which inhabits aesthetic experience and artistic creativity, emphasised by Adorno, represents an empowering feature of a desiderative and imaginative species. Second, Habermas's overly rationalistic conception of the social leads to an impoverished notion of counterfactuality. If *Gesellschaftskritik* is reduced to *Sprachkritik*, then *Gesellschaftsutopie* is reduced to a form of *Sprachutopie*. Third, Habermas conceives of normativity in transcendental, communicational, and consensual terms. Habermas's transcendental account of normativity tends to underestimate the stratifying power of social structure; Habermas's communicational account of normativity tends to undervalue the contribution of strategic action to the construction and maintenance of social order; and Habermas's consensual account of normativity tends to endorse an overly elastic—that is, consensually contingent—notion of truth.

(iii) In addition to the pitfalls inherent in the contentious Habermasian reconstruction of historical materialism and early critical theory, the Habermasian linguistic turn contains a number of substantial internal shortcomings. The analysis developed in this study has deliberately concentrated on those dimensions that are directly relevant to the conceptualisation of the social. First, inasmuch as a proceduralist account of communication must avoid advocating a merely formalistic view of truth and utopia, a consensualist account of communication must prove to do justice to the transcendental power of dissension. Second, Habermas tends to portray the social as an idealised totality of communicatively motivated rational forces, thereby underestimating the power of the habitual, ritual, emotional, and sensual dimensions that drive people's ordinary interactions. Third, Habermas's conception of the lifeworld is problematic in that it is based on a naively optimistic, comfortably utopian, and seductively romantic account of ordinary social relations. Habermas's socio-ontological optimism presupposes, rather than proves, the existential preponderance of communicative action. Habermas's socio-ontological utopianism fails to locate the problematic nature of the social in the lifeworld itself. Habermas's socio-ontological romanticism underestimates the fact that social relations are inevitably permeated by lifeworld-endogenous power relations. If both communicative rationality and strategic rationality are two foundational components of the lifeworld and, therefore, precede the functionalist rationality of the system, then the ordinary is just as problematic as the systemic. The social is problematic from the very beginning.

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Part II has been concerned with the methodical analysis of Bourdieusian reflexive sociology. The fifth chapter has examined the concept of reflexive sociology in terms of its epistemological presuppositions. (i) The analysis of the relationship between knowledge and reflexivity is concerned with the idea that reflexive sociology can be described as a project of science, vigilance, and distance. The Bourdieusian project seeks to uncover the underlying structural mechanisms of the social in a self-objectifying manner by distancing itself from both

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the ordinary and the scholastic vision of the world. (ii) The analysis of the relationship between knowledge and praxis is concerned with the insight that our view of the world necessarily depends on our situatedness in the world. To shift from the philosophy of knowledge to the sociology of knowledge means to recognise that knowledge is always socially embedded: different *Lebensformen* produce different *Weltanschauungen*. The intimate link between knowledge and praxis manifests itself in the preponderance of doxa, referring to the taken-for-grantedness of social existence based on common sense. (iii) The analysis of the relationship between knowledge and symbolic power is concerned with the inescapable power-ladenness of the production of meaning. Every horizon of symbolic relations is permeated by a horizon of power relations: there is no normative validity without social legitimacy.

The sixth chapter has elaborated upon the debate over reflexive sociology. Reflexive sociology aims to overcome the aporias inherent in rival approaches to the social. (i) The aporias of objectivism stem from its monolithic emphasis on the paradigm of objectivity. Structuralist objectivism is unable to account for the processual nature of the social. Determinist objectivism reduces human agents to decorative appendages of the social. Substantialist objectivism delegitimises the sociological significance of subjective experience. (ii) The aporias of subjectivism are rooted in its monolithic emphasis on the paradigm of subjectivity. Voluntarist subjectivism underestimates the constraining influence of the social environment upon the constitution of consciousness. Rationalist subjectivism falls short of accounting for the contextually, habitually, and multicausally determined constitution of human action. Phenomenological subjectivism ignores the macrosociological embeddedness of every microsociological encounter, it underestimates the penetration of the lifeworld by exogenous power relations, and it converts representational realities into substantial realities. (iii) The aporias of scholasticism are to be found in its pretentious celebration of the paradigm of reason. Scholastic thought emanates from the scholastically unthought: the privileged freedom from necessity. In essence, Bourdieu proposes to replace the self-sufficiency of 'philosophical reason' by the reflexivity of 'sociological reason'.

The seventh chapter has examined the Bourdieusian paradigm shift from objectivist, subjectivist, and scholastic thought to reflexive-sociological thinking. The analysis has sought to show that the Bourdieusian transcendence of the artificial separation between objectivism and subjectivism is valid because field and habitus share a considerable amount of constitutive properties. The structural affinity between field and habitus indicates their dialectical interpenetration and, therefore, the genuine transcendence of the objectivist-subjectivist antinomy.

(i) The Bourdieusian reconstruction of objectivity is undertaken by considering the field as the ontological cornerstone of social objectivity. It has been argued that the field possesses fifteen fundamental properties. In essence, these properties reflect the complexity of our field-based immersion in the social world. The degree of complexity of a specific social formation depends on the degree of complexity of its field-specific differentiation. The main strength of a field-theoretic conception of the social consists in its ability to account for the multilayered structuration of society. Even the most rudimentarily differentiated form of society that we can possibly imagine cannot dispense with a minimal degree of structural differentiation. Human action is unavoidably situated in a structurally differentiated social space. The more fields there are in a specific form of society, the more complex the multilayered constitution of human agency. The potentiality of our actions cannot escape the determinacy of our field-specific immersion in the world.

(ii) The Bourdieusian reconstruction of subjectivity conceives of the habitus as the ontological cornerstone of social subjectivity. Parallel to the field, it has been argued that the habitus possesses fifteen fundamental properties. In essence, these properties reflect the complexity of our habitus-based immersion in the social world. The main strength of a habitus-theoretic conception of the social consists in its ability to account for the dispositional structuration of subjectivity. As a *sens pratique*, the habitus equips us with the relationally developed competence to cope with the practical imperatives of a structurally differentiated social world. The dispositional structuration of our subjectivity reflects the positional structuration of society. The more we take this structuration for granted, the more powerful our acceptance of and compliance with the hierarchical differentiation of society turn out to be. The less

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aware we are of our habitus, the more power we cede to its existence. The potentiality of our actions cannot escape the determinacy of our habitus-specific immersion in the world.

(iii) The Bourdieusian reconstruction of the social is based on the dialectical relationship between field and habitus. As argued above, Bourdieu's analysis of society allows us to identify five fundamental preconditions for the very possibility of the social. Thus, social selves are only conceivable as relational, reciprocal, reconstructable, renormalisable, and recognisable selves.

The eighth chapter has discussed some of the main shortcomings inherent in the Bourdieusian approach to the social.

(i) The Bourdieusian conception of objectivity is far from unproblematic. First, Bourdieu's scientific conception of social objectivity fails to recognise that the reflexive power of scientific knowledge is rooted in the reflexive power of ordinary knowledge, which forms part of the human lifeworld. Second, to the extent that Bourdieusian social theory regards the field as the omnipresent and omnipotent socio-ontological 'base', which completely determines the constitution of human coexistence, it reproduces precisely the objectivist flaws which it claims to overcome. Third, to conceive of power as a functional category of totality, transcendentality, and homology means to hypostatise power into the ontological cornerstone of social objectivity.

(ii) The Bourdieusian conception of subjectivity is just as problematic as the Bourdieusian conception of objectivity. First, a merely reproductionist conception of the social reduces subjectivity to its reproductive features and can only be avoided by also taking into account its transformative features. Second, although Bourdieusian social theory rightly emphasises the bodily nature of human subjectivity, it also systematically underestimates the distinctive power of human consciousness. Third, by conceiving of the habitus primarily as a *sens doxique*, Bourdieu fails to account for the power of reflexivity, which does not contradict but inhabits the power of habituality.

(iii) To the extent that the Bourdieusian conceptions of objectivity and subjectivity are fraught with difficulties, the Bourdieusian conception of the social is characterised by some significant shortcomings. First, since, in Bourdieusian social theory, the object clearly remains



preponderant over the subject, Bourdieu puts forward an objectivist account of the social. Second, since Bourdieusian social theory omits to explore the nature of the social in terms of its species-constitutive specificity, it fails to identify the emancipatory potentials inherent in ordinary social actors. Third, since Bourdieu fails to uncover the species-enriching potentials inherent in every ordinary subject, it remains unclear on what grounds one can distinguish a repressive from an emancipatory form of society. As a consequence, the Bourdieusian critique of society remains stuck inside a cloud of socio-ontological fatalism. Bourdieu's fatalism manifests itself in an overly pessimistic, pointlessly defeatist, and cynically nihilistic view of the social. Socio-ontological pessimism conceives of critical reflexivity as a socio-professional, rather than a socio-ontological, competence. Socio-ontological defeatism converts social emancipation into a pointless project, because the unavoidable triumph of doxa would be tantamount to the inevitable defeat of the actor's ordinary competences. Socio-ontological nihilism is the negation of the self-empowering social and the affirmation of disempowering doxa. At the end of the day, the idea of the totalising, transcendental, and homological force of power can only be challenged by the reality of the socialising, practical, and ontological force of critical capacity. The social is problematic, but reflexive from the very beginning.

\* \* \*

Part III consists of a proposal for the cross-fertilisation of critical theory and reflexive sociology. The ninth chapter has analysed both approaches in relation to each other, identifying some principal areas of convergence, divergence, and possible integration between Habermasian and Bourdieusian thought.

(i) The analysis of the affinities and commonalities between Habermasian critical theory and Bourdieusian reflexive sociology is concerned with the identification of the normative unities of the two approaches. Ten substantial points of convergence have been identified. They are indicative of the fact that, contrary to the view that Habermas and Bourdieu put forward two incommensurable theoretical frameworks, the two approaches are not as far apart as they may appear at

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first sight and share a considerable amount of substantial theoretical preoccupations. Both highlight the importance of questioning the taken-for-grantedness of the world by virtue of critical reflexivity; both emphasise the coexistential, practical, and interest-laden nature of the human immersion in the world; both explore the importance of language for the symbolic mediation of the human social; and both insist upon the need to uncover the underlying power relations that permeate society. In short, both make a case for a critical social science.

(ii) The analysis of the differences and discrepancies between Habermasian critical theory and Bourdieusian reflexive sociology is concerned with the identification of the normative oppositions between the two approaches. Ten substantial points of divergence have been identified. Ironically, the ten main theoretical preoccupations that they have in common are at the same time the ten main theoretical dimensions that separate them from one another. In essence, their most crucial points of divergence are due to their opposed conceptions of social action, social competence, and social order. Habermas believes that communicative action constitutes the most fundamental type of social action, that our communicative competence, our *kommunikative Kompetenz*, represents our most significant social competence, and that social order is only possible as the dialectical interplay between a communicatively structured lifeworld and a functionally regulated system. By contrast, Bourdieu believes that homological action constitutes the prototypical form of social action, that our homological competence, our *sens pratique*, represents our most significant social competence, and that social order is only possible as the homological interplay between positionally structured fields and dispositionally structured habituses.

(iii) The analysis of the complementary aporias and insights of Habermasian critical theory and Bourdieusian reflexive sociology is concerned with the ways in which the two approaches can be fruitfully integrated. The analysis developed above has sought to show that valuable insights are to be gained from the methodical cross-fertilisation of Habermasian and Bourdieusian thought. These insights can be synthesised as follows.

### **The Foundations of the Social**

1. We are both communicatively rational and homologically compliant entities.
2. Communicatively raised validity is nothing without socially constituted legitimacy.
3. The power of our interactive capacity is permeated by the power of social conditionality.
4. The transcendental nature of social coordination is always already embedded in the relational nature of social differentiation.
5. The fact that we depend on one another implies not only that we need to understand, but also that we need to instrumentalise one another; there is no society without interest; purposive rationality is just as foundational as communicative rationality.
6. The reflexivity of social science is rooted in the communicatively grounded reflexivity of social actors themselves.
7. The power of structural homology cannot do away with, but is always potentially challenged by the power of communicative autonomy.
8. Inasmuch as social fields are permeated by the ordinary nature of the lifeworld, the lifeworld is permeated by the relational nature of social fields.
9. The structural differentiality of the human social stems from the existential peculiarity of the human species: our need for social structure reflects our need for normativity.
10. The fact that we depend on one another implies not only that we need to instrumentalise, but also that we need to understand one another; there is no society without mutual understanding; communicative rationality is just as foundational as purposive rationality.

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The final chapter has presented the most important features of a tentative outline of an alternative, five-dimensional approach to the social. This outline is inspired by Habermasian and Bourdieusian social theory, but seeks to go beyond these two approaches. Rather than providing a comprehensive programme for an alternative critical social theory, the tentative proposal developed in this study has deliberately focused on only one, albeit central, task of critical theory: the challenging task of identifying the socio-ontological foundations of human existence. The significance of the socio-ontological foundations for the formulation of an alternative approach to the nature of human coexistence is due to their centrality in social life: their *universal* nature allows us to identify solid, rather than arbitrary, grounds for critical theory; their *ordinary* nature allows us to identify concrete, rather than abstract, grounds for critical theory; and their *emancipatory* nature allows us to identify empowering, rather than self-defeating, grounds for critical theory.

The concept of 'socio-ontological foundation' has deliberately been defined in a rather narrow sense: only by defining the exact characteristics of a socio-ontological foundation are we able to uncover the distinctive features inherent in the grounds of the social. Critical theory needs to explore these features if it seeks to provide solid, concrete, and empowering grounds for its critique of society. The five-dimensional approach seeks to demonstrate that we can derive the normative foundations of critique from the ontological foundations of the social by restating the question of what raises us out of nature. In essence, the answer to this question proposed by the five-dimensional model is that the human species is at the same time a formative, reflexive, cultivative, desiderative, and experiential species.

In its present form, the five-dimensional approach to the social is at best a schematic and provisional proposal for the elaboration of an alternative programme in critical theory. As a tentative outline, it points towards a theoretical alternative whose main features have yet to be developed in more detail. Having said that, it may represent a viable point of departure for a fruitful future line of development in critical theory, that is, for a critical theory that grounds itself in the variegated emancipatory potentials inherent in every ordinary subject.

In the course of further research, such an alternative programme for critical theory will have to take on the challenge of substantiating the view that the most empowering resources of humanity lie in its formative, reflexive, cultivative, desiderative, and experiential potentials. Any societal project that aims at the emancipation of the human condition but fails to address the variegated emancipatory potentials inherent in the human species is necessarily in vain. As working, speaking, cultivating, longing, and experience-gathering entities, we have created the conditions of our own existence—and we will continue to do so as long as we are immersed in the social.

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